



**'The heart and stomach of a king'**

**A Study of the Regency of Lady Six Sky at Naranjo, Guatemala**

Helmke, Christophe

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### REDACTION ADDRESS:

Department of New World Archaeology  
Institute of Archaeology  
Jagiellonian University  
Golebia 11 Street  
31-007 Krakow  
Poland  
Telephone: +48 126631595

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Women in Mesoamerican Culture,  
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## ‘THE HEART AND STOMACH OF A KING’: A STUDY OF THE REGENCY OF LADY SIX SKY AT NARANJO, GUATEMALA<sup>1</sup>

CHRISTOPHE HELMKE

*Institute of Cross-cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. Email: cgbh@hum.ku.dk*

### Abstract

In this paper the historical texts of Lady Six Sky, a prominent female regent of Naranjo, are explored in order to evaluate the interpersonal relationship that she maintained with *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, the heir and her long presumed son. This review suggests that she never in earnest relinquished the reins of power and continued to exert considerable influence on the court and its affairs, much after the ascendancy and majority of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, even going on to outlive her progeny. This examination also bears out the influence and magnitude of retrospective texts and a close scrutiny of the corpus reveals that the long-reigning Lady Six Sky consolidated the power in her person and influenced the succession to favour what may have siblings, to rule in sequence, with the successor of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk* having to bide his time and await the passing of Lady Six Sky. All of these events are evaluated and used as a basis for reconstructing the difficult and often strenuous relations that prevailed in the Naranjo court during the late seventh and eighth centuries.

**Keywords:** Maya, regency, Naranjo, Lady Six Sky, Maternal dominance, Epigraphy

### Resumen

En esta contribución se exploran los textos históricos de la Señora Seis Cielo—una regente prominente de Naranjo—con el fin de evaluar la relación interpersonal que ella mantuvo con *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, el heredero que desde hace mucho tiempo se ha sospechado de ser su hijo. Esta revisión sugiere que ella nunca cedió de manera definitiva las riendas del poder y continuó ejerciendo una influencia considerable en la corte y sus asuntos, mucho después de la ascendencia y la mayoría de *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, incluso de sobrevivir a su progenie. Este examen también toma en cuenta la influencia y la magnitud de los textos retrospectivos. Un análisis detallado del corpus revela que a lo largo del reinado de la Señora Seis Cielo, el poder se consolidó en su persona, e influyó la sucesión a favor de los que pudieron haber sido hermanos, para que gobernaran sucesivamente. Por causa de esto, el sucesor de *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk* tuvo que esperar el momento oportuno y esperar el fallecimiento de la Señora Seis Cielo. Todos estos eventos se evalúan y se utilizan como base para la reconstrucción de las relaciones difíciles y, a menudo arduos que prevalecieron en la corte de Naranjo durante los finales del siglos VII y VIII.

**Palabras clave:** Maya, regencia, Naranjo, Señora Seis Cielo, dominancia materna, epigrafía

<sup>1</sup> The quote is attributed to the famous speech of Queen Elizabeth I, rousing her troops encamped at Tilbury, at the mouth of the Thames, in July 1588—during the Spanish Armada's campaign—where she is said to have proclaimed, “I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king”. The transcript that is housed in the British Library (Shelfmark: Harley 6798, f.87) reads “*I have ye harte and sto=mark of a kinge*” (wherein the /y/ of *ye* is orthographic [ð]).

*Will not my labours, care and warm concern for the good of the Empire be in vain,  
for I do see that I cannot make my frame of mind hereditary*  
Catherine II, Empress of Russia – 1787

## INTRODUCTION

The youthful Moon goddess was an exemplar of beauty and of the idealised woman in the mindset of the ancient Maya of the Classic period (c. AD 250–950). Most of her depictions show her seated serenely amidst a stylised lunar crescent, cradling her characteristic rabbit (K2733, 5166)—an animal tied with this heavenly body in Mesoamerica as well as other Native American and Eastern Asian cultures (see López Austin 1996; Taube 1992: 64–68; Thompson 1939). Glyphic texts recording the waxing and waning of the moon, often use the predicate *huli* ‘s/he arrived’, an idiomatic expression referring to the lunar phases (MacLeod 1990: 339–340), but figuratively, and by extension, also to the arrival of Lady Moon. As such, the ‘arrival’ of women at distant royal courts, to meet their prospective husbands, were likened to the passage of Lady Moon through the firmament (Grube and Martin 2004: 111; Miller and Martin 2004: 96–97; Houston 2012)—much as was the case with Lady Six Sky upon her arrival to Naranjo from her native Dos Pilas (Figure 1b–c). This is reified by examples wherein the lunar crescent that is used in such expressions bear the likeness of Lady Moon (Figure 1a).

The impression of Lady Moon as an unchanging and almost passive actor in Maya cosmology should, however, be nuanced by a mythological narrative that I designate as the “Abduction from the Seraglio”. This myth survives in scenes represented on Late Classic vases (c. AD 650–830) showing the youthful Lady Moon in the court of the elderly *Huk Yohl Si’p*, the master of deer, wild animals and wilderness in general (see Helmke and Nielsen 2009: 69–71; Taube 2003: 473–476). These decorous and domestic scenes give way to a series of vases that appear to depict the young woman giving in to desire and engaging in an illicit affair with a young male who at times takes on the guise of a deer (K4012, 2794, 9118, 1339) (see Robicsek and Hales 1981: 170). The affair is discovered and the pace of the narrative quickens, as we see Lady Moon fleeing on the back of a deer (K8927, 1182, 1559, 3069), presumably her lover, as they take flight before a mob of irate and armed men (see Pendergast 1969: 41–52, Fig. 12; Helmke and Nielsen 2009: 76, Fig. 10d). From a more recent account of this myth that has survived among the Q’eqchi’, Sir J. Eric S. Thompson (1939: 150, 1970: 365) relates that in her flight, the deer bore Lady Moon to the heavens to seek sanctuary, where she to this day continues her voyage, as her assailants pursue her ceaselessly as stars. Much more than relating the etiology of the moon and her celestial wanderings, these mythic narratives also convey the advent of Lady Moon in her proper and more adult persona. It is in this placid guise, the excesses of youth behind her, that Lady Moon is represented in courtly depictions as the consort of God D, the aged and supreme celestial deity, seated together on their throne (K0504, 5166), as archetypes of noble demeanour (see Miller and Martin 2004: 51–54).

Considering the courtly depictions of Lady Moon as companion to prominent males, it is little surprise that the roles, duties and appearance of the earthly consort coalesced with those of the mythic counterpart. Yet, proper demeanour and social behaviour at court is something that is little known and understood, especially given the sources available (but see Worm Danbo and Helmke 2014). Even to this day, the particular intrigues and goings-on of the few extant royal courts around the world are the source of much gossip and speculation, much maligned by the weary and envious.

The stresses of high rank in highly stratified societies that are placed on youths of noble births are now well known and recognised, albeit paradoxical in the eyes of many, considering the life of luxury and excess that surrounds their birth and upbringing. In fact, the affluent and well-fed, were generally better buffered against disease and thereby had greater physical stature and went on to live longer lives

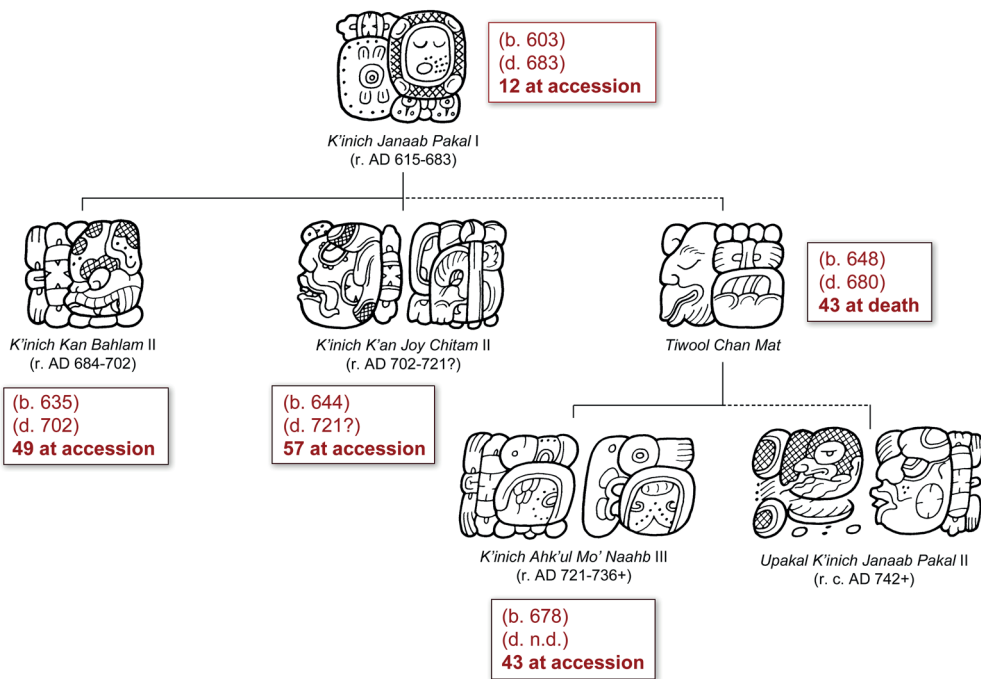


**Figure 1.** The lunar crescent as the logogram *hul*, ‘to arrive’. a) Jadeite celt from Tomb 1 in Str. 3, at Calakmul, relating the arrival to a mythic location, note Lady Moon within the lunar crescent. b) Detail of Naranjo Stela 29 relating the arrival of Lady Six Sky in AD 682. c) Detail of Stela 24 recording the arrival of Lady Six Sky to prominent localities within the monumental epicentre of Naranjo (drawings by Christophe Helmke).

than their poorer kinsmen (Haviland 1967; Storey 1997; Wright and White 1996). Considering human nature and the many analogues at our disposal we can recognise a series of patterns wherein charismatic and influential parents are often followed by indolent, obstinate and dysfunctional children, but with the next generation the cycle, fortunately, begins anew, bringing with it new promise and hope.

Much has been written about the great kings of old, those that have left an impressive material imprint in the form of buildings and who have solidified their dynasties and successfully waged wars on their adversaries. What should be remembered is that these rulers are also the ones that have been blessed with lengthy reigns, and it is partly through a combination of features that they have been able to harness the reins of power and to carve out their place in history. Such kings from the Maya area include the famed *K'inich Janaab Pakal* of Palenque (r. AD 615–683) who ruled for a stunning 68 years, as well as Shield Jaguar III of Yaxchilan (r. AD 681–742) with his 61 years in rulership, and the ruler known as “Aj Wosal” of Naranjo (r. AD 546–615+)—whose name may actually have been *Ajasaaj Chan K'inich*<sup>2</sup>—who ruled at least 69 years, making him the longest reigning monarch in Classic Maya history (see Grube 2004a: 239). In the case of *Pakal* the succession to the throne was a matter of great complexity and undoubtedly one greatly deliberated in antiquity (Figure 2). Due to his lengthy rule and advanced age at death, his eldest son acceded to the throne as *Kan Bahlam* II, at the age of 49, a high age in preindustrial societies. Needless to say, his rule was necessarily

<sup>2</sup> The regnal name of this long-reigning monarch requires some comments. Initially this ruler was provisionally referred to as “Double Comb” by Michael Closs (1984), a nickname that was superseded by “Aj Wosal” based on a partial reading of the name (Martin and Grube 2000: 71). With the discovery of Altar 2 at Naranjo we see a more complete form of the regnal name ending in *Chan K'inich* (Grube 2004b: 197; Grube and Martin 2004: 46–48), a form of the name that is also found on the recently discovered Stela 46 (Martin et al. 2016). Concurrently, Marc Zender identified the logogram **AJ**, which functions as an agentive prefix (Zender 2005a), and based on a revealing example of the nominal sequence (K7716) it is clear that this **AJ** sign does not substitute for the vocalic sign **a**



**Figure 2.** The descent and succession of Palenque's *K'inich Janaab Pakal I* (adapted after Miller and Martin 2004: Fig. 58).

shorter than that of his father, reigning only a total 18 years. However, another problem presented itself because *Kan Bahlam II* apparently did not have a male issue or any issue at all, and a pattern of agnatic seniority was therefore implemented to the succession, leading his younger brother to take up the throne. Though his junior, he was 57 years old at the time of his accession, reigning as *K'an Joy Chitam II* and ruled for a comparable period of time to his predecessor and brother (*i.e.* 19 years). Much as his brother he too seems to have been unable to produce an issue or male heir and therefore the throne should have passed to the youngest of the brothers one *Tiwool? Chan Mat*, but as fate would have it, he passed at the age of 43, more than four decades before the death of *K'an Joy Chitam II*. This presented the dynasty with a dilemma since the succession by agnatic seniority was therewith broken, the sibling generation being exhausted of potential successors. Unlike his brothers, however *Tiwool? Chan Mat* had two sons, from different wives, and as such the succession was passed agnatically

(T12), which usually forms part of the name, but precedes it as a separate prefix. Thus, at times the name would be recorded without the agentive prefix, in much the same way as the suffix is eliminated in some cases (such as on Naranjo Stela 3 and Altar 2). The wavy element above the *sa* syllabogram that had initially been identified as *wo?*, may just be a calligraphic feature of the *sa* sign. There are in fact good examples of *sa* signs, with such "antennae" or wavy protrusions (e.g., K1728 and Tokovinine 2007: Fig. 7b). Based on these identifications, the most complete transliteration of the name is **AJ-a-sa-ji**, read *ajasaaj*, involving the rare root *as*, possibly the verb 'play' (as seen in the compound form *alas* 'game, child's play', in lowland Mayan languages), followed by the derivational suffix *-aaj* that marks the perfect aspect for transitive verbal expressions. This reading of the name as *Ajasaaj Chan K'inich*, can be thereby translated as 'It is the radiant one (Sun god) who has played in the sky'.

and posthumously from father-to-son, to the one who would rule as *K'inich Ahku'l Mo' Naahb* III (r. AD 721–736+) and eventually in a resumption of the agnatic seniority pattern to his half brother *Upakal K'inich* (r. c. AD 742+) (see Martin and Grube 2000: 168-174; Stuart and Stuart 2008: 162-163). The legitimization process of *K'inich Ahku'l Mo' Naahb* III was particularly demanding since it required a posthumous bestowal of heir designation, and as a result much stock was placed on what may be contrived historical events wherein *Pakal* is said to have appointed his three sons to rule in succession, when they were all alive and well, as recorded in the fallen stuccoes of Temple 18 (see Zender 2004: 310-312; Stuart and Stuart 2008: 162-163; Worm Danbo and Helmke 2014: 68-69).

The lengthy reign of *Pakal*, while celebrated today as one of the greatest in Maya history, is clearly one that offered many challenges to his contemporaries and successors. This is a pattern that is seen the world over, wherein long and stable reigns are often followed by short reigns and periods of instability, if not outright civil war. This is exacerbated by the interpersonal relations between ruling monarch and heir to the throne. A charismatic and energetic ruler is often one who concentrates all power in the king and is unwont to delegate, leaving his offspring ill-equipped for the arduous task ahead. Such heirs are thereby often ones that live idle and decadent, if not hedonistic, lives away from the court and never learn the art of diplomacy nor the intricacies of government. It therefore follows that periods of stability afforded by long reign are followed, time and again, by troubled times and disputes in the dynastic succession brought about by the advanced age of the previous incumbent. This is what we can see in the case of Yaxchilan, following the reign of Shield Jaguar III, which is promptly followed by the so-called “Interregnum”, which spanned a decade until the accession of *Yaxuun Bahlam* IV in AD 752 (Martin and Grube 2000: 127) and at Naranjo, where the reign of *Ajasaaj Chan K'inich* is followed by the “First Hiatus” that shrouds the reigns of the 36<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> successors, until the accession of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk* in AD 693 (Martin and Grube 2000: 72-73; Grube 2004b: 197-200). These periods of unrest may have been triggered by disputes over the succession, escalating into outright civil war, with the added intervention of foreign powers meddling in alliances and resorting to military incursions.

The importance of the interpersonal relationship between king and heir, between father and son cannot be overstated, since it inherently had a profound impact on the nation that they ruled. A close and nurturing father, one unafraid to delegate and willing to show his son the proverbial ropes would undoubtedly better equip the future king and thereby the prospects of the kingdom. Thus, whereas the psychological realm of the royal few and their complicated interrelationships are often little understood, these necessarily affect and influence not only the interrelations of the court, but also the realm at large, not to mention far-flung allies and opponents. Accordingly, a clearer and more incisive assessment of such relations, especially at a psychological level is of paramount importance to a critical evaluation of the historical texts at our disposal. It is with precisely this aim that I have examined the texts from Naranjo that date to the late seventh and eighth centuries, especially those pertaining to the regency of Lady Six Sky and the reign of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, who has long been presumed to be her son, in order to attempt a socio-psychological reconstruction of their interpersonal relationships. As this may be the first such archaeopsychological study in the Maya area there are undoubtedly many salient creases left to iron out, but it is an attempt and one which I hope will stimulate like forays and further discussions of this approach vis-à-vis the matter of historiography.

## WOMEN IN MAYA SOCIETY

Despite our appreciation of the epitome of womankind we know remarkably little of the role of women in Classic Maya society. Could women own property outright, could they sever marital bonds and deputise on behalf of their male relations, family members and counterparts, alike? Men and



women, by all accounts, did not lead antithetical lives, but complementary ones (see Stuart 2003), each dominating not only the division of labour, but also gender ideologies and the practicalities of daily life (see Joyce 2001; Arden 2002; Robin and Brumfiel 2008). In some measure we can broach emic preconceptions of women as the lighter-skinned indoor members of society, whereas men were precisely the opposite, a stereotype that was fostered by depictions of men and women in courtly scenes, as well as women travelling under the shaded canopies of palanquins or at least concealed under broad brimmed hats (see Nehammer Knub 2010; see also Schele and Freidel 1990: 183-184; Stone 2011).

One aspect of women and their role in society that is beyond dispute is their paramount importance in procreating children and as such represent the clearest means of tracing descent. This is particularly true since one can be certain as to who the mother of a child is, whereas in the case of the father the issue is often more liable to contention. Also childbirth in preindustrial society was the most perilous and life-threatening obligation of a woman, on par with the role of men as warriors, falling on the field of battle. This is an equivalence between the sexes that was drawn in Mesoamerica as attested by the differing types of afterlives promised, with fallen warriors and women dying in childbirth going on to the utmost florid paradisiacal realm (see Taube 2004, 2006). The place of families and the social roles of their members were firmly grounded in social norms and expectations of society. Thus, to form a family, as a viable socio-economic unit, to bond with the opposite sex and to procreate, to be a good spouse, a good parent, are all ideals of most human societies throughout the ages, and the Classic Maya are no exception in this regard (Vázquez López 2015: 47-56).

At the level of the nuclear family, whereas emphasis is usually always placed on the relationship between father and son, especially as this pertains to dynastic successions and king lists, the relationship between mothers and their children is equally important, although much less discussed in the academic literature. Thus, it is prudent not to efface the important relationship between queen and heir, mother and son. Much more than the mere procreators of dynastic successors, the role that women are usually cast in, the mother of the heir and women in the ancient Maya court at large were also responsible for a wide array of economic and ritual tasks and obligations that were deemed essential to proper performance, decorum and propriety (Inomata 2001: 36-39; Houston and Stuart 2001: 64-68). For instance if we look to *Pakal* and the so-called Oval Tablet that commemorates his accession, we see that it is his mother, Lady *Sak K'uk'*, who hands him the headdress at his coronation, a shell-platelet headdress that finds its origins in the regalia of Teotihuacan (Figure 3a). Thus here, we see that it is the ritual actions of the mother that provide legitimacy and without this the ruler would be without a crown. While the scene depicted in this panel has long been taken to represent a typical Classic Maya ritual, based on recent evidence it now seems clear that this headdress as well as the ritual and the lore surrounding it all ultimately derive from Teotihuacan. While the origin of the shell-platelet headdress has been discussed at some length by several scholars (Martin 2001: 104; Nielsen and Helmke 2011: 347-348; von Winning 1981) it is the ritual act of presenting the headdress that stands out in this regard. On a brownware ceramic vessel discovered in the La Ventilla barrio of Teotihuacan we see a scene incised into the bottom of the vase, depicting a woman wearing a characteristic *kechkeemil* who reaches out a headdress held in her hands (Figure 3b), anticipating the scene of the Oval Tablet by several centuries. The feather headdress that she holds is qualified by a trapeze-and-ray Year Sign and is complete with false hair, as is typical of Teotihuacan headdresses (Conides and Barbour 2002: 415-421; Nielsen 2003: 91-93). This scene, as well as another represented on a incised plano-relief sherd (von Winning 1981) demonstrate that this Mesoamerican coronation ritual can be traced back to Early Classic Teotihuacan and corroborates the important role of women in royal rites as well as their pivotal place in performing the rite of succession.

Key concepts that must also be raised in this regard are Maternal Dominance and Matrifocality, which I will introduce in turn. Whereas the introduction of Western Psychological and Sociological



**Figure 3.** Iconographic scenes that demonstrate the pivotal role of women in the accession ceremonies in Mesoamerica. a) The so-called Oval Tablet of Structure E within the palace of Palenque (after Lothrop 1929: Plate 1b); b) Scene incised into an Early Classic ceramic vessel, La Ventilla, Teotihuacan (drawing by Christophe Helmke, courtesy of the Proyecto Arqueológico La Ventilla).

concepts at this juncture may raise a few eyebrows, I take as given that the basic physiognomy and psychological stock of modern humans, be it in the in the modern world or in ancient civilizations, are equivalent and inherently unchanged. It is from this vantage that we can assess the psychological conditions and interpersonal relations using these modern labels, although it is conceded that cultural differences, then as well as now, exert tremendous pressures on how individuals are able to cope with adversity and to express anxiety and emotions. Maternal Dominance is a concept that has wide bearing in Anthropological and more recently in Socio-biological literature, since one of the basic stipulations is that dominant mothers, or women who exert influence upon the other members of her group, and thereby assume a position of power, are more likely to attract males for the purposes of reproduction and to consolidate their position in the community, but will also, oddly enough exhibit a biological propensity to give birth to a higher frequency of males than might otherwise be expected (e.g. Geller and Stockett 2007; Grant 1994). Whereas the underlying principle of this hypothesis can be discussed, as can the veracity of the results of the studies conducted on human populations, the usefulness of the label to designate women in positions of power and the associated psychological traits, and how these affect interpersonal relations, are what I deem to be most relevant. As such we can speak of Maternal Dominance, as divorced from the Socio-biological applications of the hypothesis that fill the academic literature, as a pattern wherein strong and charismatic women, who are mothers to sons, tend to dominate much of the interpersonal relations in a given community and generally affect the formation of their children’s character, and to some degree repress their sons and control their actions throughout life. Whereas it may be difficult to demonstrate empirically, in particularly drastic instances the sons of dominant mothers can be observed to pass away before the mothers themselves, presumably a product of psychological deterioration and lowered immunity buffering, coupled with disease. Another key concept here is that of Matrifocality (see Geller and Stockett 2007). Whereas much ink has been spilled

on discussions of whether Classic Maya society was patrilineal or matrilineal, the current evidence afforded by the epigraphic record confirms the importance of patrilineal descent, which bears out the overt male-dominance of much of Classic Maya politics (Vazquez López 2015: 31-35). Preferring to sidestep this debate I would like us to consider the term *Matrifocality* and the importance of the concept denoted, in describing the relationship between Lady Six Sky and *K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk* of Naranjo. One way to define matrifocality is by its antithesis, since the term can be used to describe societies that exhibit a low degree of patridominance at the level of the household. A more genuine definition, with relatively wide currency in Anthropology, sees matrifocality as describing a domestic group that it is centred on a woman and children, with the father(s) of these children being only intermittently present in the life of the group and occupy a decidedly secondary place. The maternal figure is not necessarily the wife of one of the children's fathers, or phrased differently is not the biological mother of (some of) the children (e.g. Smith 1996). As a result, women occupy high status in matrifocal societies and control the household economy, whereas males tend to be absent, absences that are often of long durations. It is these two concepts that I would like to introduce, especially as these help to qualify the intricate and complicated relationship between the dominant Lady Six Sky and *K'ahk'Tiliw*.

## FEMALE REGENTS IN DYNASTIC MONARCHIES

This raises the matter of the role of high standing women in Classic Maya society with respect to their place in the hierarchy of the court and their relation to the monarch. Were female consorts of the monarch divided between the favoured primary consort and secondary ones, co-rulers with their male counterpart, as regents to their sons? Also, were there provisions for ruling in their own right as queen regnant on par with the examples that we know from the Old World such as Elizabeth I of England (r. AD 1558–1603), Catherine II of Russia (r. AD 1762–1796), or Hatshepsut of Egypt (c. 1479–1458 BC)? In these male-dominated societies there were no stipulations for women as supreme and exclusive ruler, and for them to survive they needed to assume male roles as well the trappings and titles usually restricted to males. In the case of Hatshepsut, she was to be depicted as a male pharaoh and reign under the same title (Figure 4a), and as such ruled not as queen, but as “King”. In a broader scope, this brings us to the subject of female rulers in ancient civilizations, which by all accounts was a rarity in male-dominated societies. In patrifocal societies latent machismo is typically the norm, often accompanied by a denigration of characteristics associated with the feminine. Yet, such male dominated societies exert much focus on the idealised characteristics and qualities that are culturally conceived as manly, especially when manifested in an assertive, self-conscious and dominating manner. As such, it is less that women in ancient societies were excluded for positions of power, it is more that cultural conceptions were wholly segregated according to sex, with courtly positions being gender specific and that of ruler being the preserve of males.

Thus, one of the means of obtaining authority as women in antiquity was to assume the role of regent for a minor, to whom power was nominally bequeathed, and from this to expand their power base by channelling the decision-making process, and essentially appropriating the authority that was destined to the minor. It is precisely through these means that some of the most prominent women of history gained power, including *Hatshepsut* of Egypt, Anne of Kiev in France and Empress Dowager *Cixi* of China. In these cases, their political careers began in earnest as regents, some going on to becoming king in their own right, and others empress. The assumption of power, as regent, also affected the interpersonal relations between mother and child, at times straining already trying relations, as is made evident by Catherine the Great's quotation at the start of this paper, wherein she bemoans her son's state of mind and his aptitude to serve as fitting successor. The rise to prominence of these



regents also generated a lot of discussion among the males at court, many of whom felt side-stepped and resorted to misogynous sentiments to curry favour among dissidents. Such difficult predicaments were worsened by what was seen as improper demeanour, wherein these powerful women, much as Lady Moon, succumbed to human yearning.

All of these prominent women were given a good start in life. Hatshepsut the daughter of Thutmose I; Anne of Kiev the daughter of Yaroslav the Wise, Grand Prince of Kiev and Novgorod (r. AD 1019–1054) and Ingegerd Olofsdotter of Sweden (Hallu 1973); whereas *Cixi* served as imperial concubine from adolescence, to the 9<sup>th</sup> Emperor of the Qing dynasty (Paludan 1998: 209–210). Following pharaonic custom, Hatshepsut was married to her half-brother Thutmose II (r. 1493–



**Figure 4.** a) Queen *Hatshepsut* depicted as a male pharaoh, being blessed by Amun; detail of the pyramidion of her fallen obelisk in the temple of Amun at Karnak. b) A tomb graffiti that is thought to depict Hatshepsut being taken from behind by *Senenmut*. c) Anne of Kiev at her wedding with Henry I; detail of an illumination in the *Chroniques de Saint-Denis* (c. AD 1332–1350). d) Photograph entitled “Empress Dowager *Cixi* in the guise of *Avalokitesvara*”, dated 1903–1904 (Glass plate negative, courtesy of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives).

1479 BC) 4<sup>th</sup> ruler of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, and she gave birth to a daughter, but no son. Instead, it was a lady-in-waiting who bore the pharaoh a son, who would rule as Thutmose III (r. 1479–1425 BC), and the charge fell to Hatshepsut to serve as regent to her stepson (Clayton 1994: 102; Tyldesley 2006: 94–95). In the case of Anne of Kiev, she was the second wife to Henry I, King of the Franks (r. AD 1027–1060) 3<sup>rd</sup> king of the Capetian dynasty (Figure 4c), and bore him a son, who was crowned as Philip I (r. AD 1059–1108) at the age of seven—in anticipation of her husband’s passing—at which juncture she assumed the regency. *Cixi* had the fortune of being the only woman in the royal household to bear the *Xianfeng* Emperor (r. AD 1850–1861) a son, and although she was initially of lesser rank, was immediately promoted, until she was second only to the Empress. The heir apparent, aged five, was made *Tongzhi* Emperor (r. AD 1861–1875), upon the death of his father (Paludan 1998: 209–210). Ousting a group of regents and allying herself with the Empress, *Cixi* assumed the regency of her son.

In keeping with tradition, Hatshepsut allowed Thutmose III to officiate rituals, but she assumed titles of royalty and the ritual privileges reserved to kings, such as the erection of obelisks, and having usurped her stepson’s regnal years designations, by the seventh such year she had been crowned king of Egypt, replete with full regal style (Tyldesley 2006: 95–96). Anne of Kiev distinguished herself as the first queen of France to serve as regent, but also for the influence that she exerted on government, signing decrees in her own right in Cyrillic, and her husband’s bearing *obiter dicta*, such as “with the consent of my wife Anna” or “in the presence of Queen Anna” (McLaughlin 2010: 55–56), which were followed by similar phraseology in her son’s records as *dominorum nostrorum, piissimorum regum, Philippi scilicet et matris ejus Agnetis* and *per interventum matris mee A.*<sup>3</sup> (Bautier 1985: 552). With the reins of power secured, Hatshepsut turned her attention on maintaining the borders of the territory and a series of military campaigns were waged against vassals to the east and Nubians to the south, thereby securing tribute relations and trade, furthered by expeditions for the acquisition of resources such as wood, minerals, metals and ivory (Tyldesley 2006: 99–100). With state coffers replenished these achievements were aptly commemorated and committed to stone, by commissioning the construction of a series of temples throughout Egypt as well as restoring others that had fallen into disrepair. Interesting is the claim made by Hatshepsut wherein she boasts of personally expunging the preceding Hyksos dynasty from Egypt (Tyldesley 2006: 100), a remarkable claim considering that the last ruler of that intrusive dynasty was expelled nearly a century before her ascent to power (Clayton 1994: 97), but it shows a keen and deliberate attempt to liken herself to her predecessors, thereby defining a clear link between the past and the present. *Cixi* through a series of manipulations and culling the administration that was faithful to the previous regime assumed full powers and although it was her son who nominally ruled as Emperor, she controlled him by “ruling behind the curtain” that had been installed behind the imperial throne (Paludan 1998: 210). As such she ruled on behalf of the boy emperor and issued edicts that were in favour of her political vision and form of government. Upon majority the *Tongzhi* Emperor was married to the *Jiashun* Empress, who was selected by the former empress, and rapidly went on to despise *Cixi*, since the *Tongzhi* Emperor spent most of his time with his wife (at the detriment of *Cixi*) and she thereby stood up to her mother-in-law. Suffering from the abuses of his mother and the unrelenting interferences with his personal life and the office he occupied, the *Tongzhi* Emperor began to unleash his anguish on his servants and found solace outside of the Forbidden City in debauchery in the brothels of Beijing. At a loss, the emperor became visibly ill and passed away in 1875 at the age of 19, quite possibly succumbing to Maternal Dominance (Paludan 1998: 213). Although the *Tongzhi* Emperor died without a male heir, *Cixi* acted swiftly and without hesitation by appointing the four-year-old son of her sister to assume the throne, as the *Guangxu* Emperor (r. AD 1875–1908) (Paludan 1998: 213). In addition to breaking with the rules of dynastic

<sup>3</sup> These segments can be translated as: ‘Our Lady, most gracious of kings, Philip and in his mother’s name [Anna]’ (Latinised as Agnes) as well as ‘through the intervention of my mother A[nn]a’.

succession, this arrangement artificially prolonged *Cixi*’s ability to rule as regent over a minor, forcing her nephew to address her as *qin baba* (亲爸爸) ‘dear father’ as a means of underlying her patriarchal role in the royal household (New World Encyclopedia 2013). Although *Guangxu* reached his maturity at sixteen, an important turning point that should have been marked by a ceremony to this effect, the rite of passage was postponed, allegedly on the advice of ministers to prolong the regency (Paludan 1998: 213). But the situation could not last and *Guangxu* formally took the reins of power at 18, concurrently marrying the Empress *Longyu*, who was not only cousin to the emperor, but also the niece of *Cixi*. The regency of *Cixi* was also marked by several large building projects, especially the construction of an opulent summer place and eventually funnelling much needed funds for the modernisation of the navy to build marble pleasure boats on an artificial lake (Paludan 1998: 211, 213)—a perversion if there ever was one. Accentuating what might be described as delusions of grandeur, *Cixi*, as a devout Buddhist, is known to have dressed up as and impersonated *Avalokiteśvara*, a bodhisattva embodying compassion and mercy (Figure 4d). Whereas *Cixi* formally retired in 1889 she effectively continued to exercise power until her last breath in 1908, but not until she appointed *Puyi*, a nephew of *Guangxu*, as the new emperor (Paludan 1998: 217). Not all too coincidentally, the *Guangxu* Emperor passed the day before *Cixi*, and recent forensic tests have revealed the cause of death as arsenic poisoning (Spencer 2008). As such we can see that *Cixi* effectively controlled as an autocrat despite the many emperors that she nominally served as regent to, and which she saw to their deaths rather than relinquishing power.

Despite the authority that these regents controlled they were not beyond critique and were targets for their intimacies with men, which were regarded as improper to their stations, perhaps especially considering their gender. In the case of Hatshepsut a defamatory graffiti found in one of the tombs at Deir el-Bahari, has been interpreted as presenting the pharaoh in a scurrilous light, unflatteringly naked except for her royal headdress, bent over and sexually assailed by Senenmut (Figure 4b)—a man of humble origins who was reputed to have been her lover, an opinion fuelled amid much speculation concerning his rapid elevation from tutor to the prestigious title of Steward of Amun (Tyldesley 2007: 98-99; Clayton 1994: 105). The effect of this misogynous graffiti is clearly to undermine Hatshepsut as ruler and represents a brazen disrespect for the monarchy, but it also comments on what was deemed to be an unsuitable relation. With her passing in the 22<sup>nd</sup> regnal year, Thutmose III was finally free to embark on his own and rule Egypt as sole pharaoh and towards the end of his reign there was a widespread attempt to rid the historical record of his step-mother’s name (Tyldesley 2006: 107). Anne of Kiev succumbed to an unfortunate fate when just one year after the passing of her husband, she took a passionate fancy for Count Ralph III of Valois, a man whose political ambition led him to repudiate his wife and to marry Anne in 1062 (Bautier 1985: 553). Amidst accusations of adultery, appeals were made to Pope Alexander II, who promptly took measures to excommunicate the couple. Lapses of judgement and indiscretions aside, we have to imagine how this situation affected the young Philip, especially considering his pedigree and planned trajectory. Bearing in mind the many improprieties that Philip engaged in later life, earning him the appellative *l’Amoureux*, and resulting in his own excommunication, it is difficult to look past the behavioural model that he seems to have emulated (Hallu 1973). Outside of the court, much of Philip’s reign was spent suppressing the ambitions of vassals, including a truce made with William the Conqueror in his repeated attempts to conquer Brittany (Bates 2001: 183-184). The impropriety of Anne’s actions resulted in her being ousted from court, until 1074 at which juncture Ralph died and Anne, being pardoned by her son, returned to the Frankish court, only to die the following year. As for *Cixi*, she has been deemed of dubious morals, awarding high posts to those who enjoyed her company, scratching servants who displeased her and upon the death of her favourite eunuch it was plainly, but meaningfully remarked that “his teapot had a spout” (Paludan 1998: 213).

In summary, we can see that irrespective of the competency with which female regents rule on behalf of the young male that they are meant to guard, tutor and lead, we can see a disproportionate



amount of attention being paid to unions with males that are deemed improper on account of their uneven status and position, with the males in such unions being typically younger and of lesser standing. Sexual relations, real or imagined, practiced by these regents are the subject of profuse attention and blather. Paradoxically, often times these regents serve not only as a solid joint in the dynastic succession between the untimely death of a ruler and the assumption of power of a minor, but also serve to stabilise the political situation and often quell dissention and the near-incipience of civil war. Perhaps it is less surprising that such regencies are also characterised by much conflict, focused especially on vassals to ensure their continued obedience, but also on near neighbours to consolidate borders. One can image that such strife is brought about precisely on account of the perceived weakness of a female regent and minor ruler, resulting in scheming on the part of restless and overly power-hungry inferiors.

Following this review of three regencies one may gain the impression that these were all arrangements and periods characterised exclusively by the usurpation of power. This is not the intended impression, not the least since many, if not most, historical regencies have been rather uneventful affairs and have served their purpose well as transitional periods, providing bridges over potentially troubled successions. However, the illustrative examples explored here, can better guide our understanding of the situation at Naranjo during the regency of Lady Six Sky, especially since the examples are drawn from a variety of cultures and time-periods and yet there are many parallel and overarching elements and structures that affect and influence the agents in these historical episodes, offering us promising points of analogy and comparison to the case at hand.

## LADY SIX SKY

The historical Lady Six Sky, is by now a well-known figure, having been discussed in the academic literature from 1960 onwards. She was first identified in the pioneering research of Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1960: 464-466, 1993: 72-78; see also Marcus 1976: 58-60), who referred to her as the “Lady of Tikal”. Proskouriakoff’s designation, stems from the fact that Lady Six Sky is styled by her Emblem Glyph as *K’uhul Mutu’l Ajaw*, ‘divine *Mutu’l* king’, a title typically attributed to the monarchs of Tikal, but following the defeat of the latter in AD 562 and the resulting dynastic disputes over the succession, the title was also borne by the splinter dynasty established at Dos Pilas, claiming in many ways to be both a new Tikal, but also the legitimate *Mutu’l* dynasty (Houston 1993: 97-102). As the daughter of *Bajlaj Chan K’awiil*, the prominent Dos Pilas king (r. AD 648–692+), Lady Six Sky inherited the ritual privilege of bearing the dynastic title<sup>4</sup>, and interestingly she often bears the full Emblem Glyph without the female agentive prefix *ix-*, thereby actually bearing what is effectively a male title (although see Tuszyńska 2016: 99, 103, 108 for other examples of titles without the female agentive prefix). This can be contrasted to the titular variation *Ixmutu’l Ajaw*, that can be translated as ‘*Mutu’l* princess’, which she also bears on multiple occasions (see Stela 3: E9; Stela 24: D18; Stela 31: J15).

Her actual name remains debated since it includes a series of logograms that continue to resist decipherment. Comparing the various spellings of her name, the most coherent transliteration seems

<sup>4</sup> In addition to inheriting the Emblem Glyph of the *Mutu’l* dynasty from her father (see Tuszyńska 2016 concerning the problems surrounding the inheritance of EGs by women), she also inherited the distinctive *Naahbal K’inich* title that was the reserve of Tikal kings. Her father *Bajlaj Chan K’awiil* is named with that title on Hieroglyphic Stair 4 and is shown brandishing a shield on Stela 9 at Dos Pilas that is emblazoned with this title and Lady Six Sky bears this title in the clause recording her arrival on Stela 29 at Naranjo (F10). As such, despite the dynastic disputes that pitted Tikal against Dos Pilas, Lady Six Sky bore titles of Tikal, as legitimate heiress to the prerogatives of that dynasty.

to be: **IX-6-CHAN-[T284]AJAW-T24**, for which the undeciphered signs are rendered based on their reference numbers in the Thompson catalogue (1962: 43, 450). For the last logogram, David Stuart (2010: 291-292) has suggested that this represents a polished stone celt and that it may function as the logogram **LEM?**, although we are lacking clear substitution sets and phonetic complements to securely tie down this reading. For the intervening T284, Nikolai Grube (2016), on the basis of shared onomastic patterns in the names of queen consorts of the courts of La Corona and Yaxchilan, has suggested the reading of *jalām*, possibly 'weaver', an aspect of the lunar goddess, *Ixuuw*, 'Lady Moon'.<sup>5</sup> As such a more complete, albeit tentative reading of Lady Six Sky's name would be: *ixwak chan jalām ajaw lem*. Although the numeral 'six' appears as part of the name, it may either provide a toponymic function to qualify her as the '6<sup>th</sup> heaven(ly) weaver' or alternatively, may have a connection with a celestial centipede known as a *wak*, on account of homophony (see Guenter 2007: 22-23)—a hypothesis that is strengthened by examples of names involving, the centipede *wak* as well as a the sky and celt signs (see Stuart 2010: Fig. 12.6). While these new insights are providing a clearer understanding of her name, considering the many queries that remain I will err on the side of caution and continue using Lady Six Sky as a more neutral moniker that is more impervious to changes in glyphic decipherment.

Our current understanding of the Naranjo dynasty rests also on the work of Michael Closs, who provided outlines of the dynastic sequence, and a captivating historical account formulated by Linda Schele and David Freidel (1990: 183-195) that clarified the roles of the major players in the geopolitics of the Late Classic Maya. These promising leads were furthered by more recent work by Nikolai Grube and Simon Martin (Martin and Grube 2000; Grube 2004b; Grube and Martin 2004; Martin 1996) who provide lucid syntheses of the dynastic history. These insights have been built upon by Alexandre Tokovinine, Simon Martin, and Vilma Fialko, who have reported on the recently discovered monuments at the site (Tokovinine and Fialko 2007; also Martin *et al.* 2016, 2017). My own contributions stem from my work in the Belize Valley—an area that in antiquity was variously under the influence or outright control of either Naranjo or Caracol (Awe and Helmke 2014; Helmke 2018; Helmke and Awe 2008, 2012; Helmke *et al.* 2006, 2010, 2015)—and from the workshops on the corpora of these two major centres, held in collaboration with Harri Kettunen (Helmke and Kettunen 2004, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2017). Based on this research, the historical highlights of the regency of Lady Six Sky and the reign of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk* are tabulated below (Table 1). This table is not meant to relate all the events that are known from the historical record, but instead the salient turning points that are specifically tied to one or the other agent in the original sources.

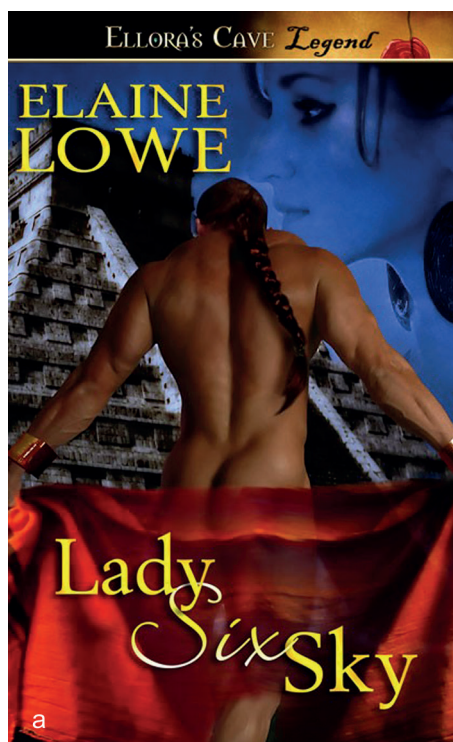
Considering all this research it is little wonder that Lady Six Sky has captured the public imagination, as the woman regent, who against all odds, was able to weather the storms of political intrigue and war, foster the young Naranjo ruler *K'ahk' Tiliw* to maturity and jointly defeating the foes that were massing around them, only to usher in a period of stability witnessing the pinnacle of the court's ceramic workshops, producing a series of incomparable chefs-d'œuvre. As we will see, this glowing review is only partly accurate, but suffice it to say that these types of syntheses prevail in common preconceptions, if we are to gauge her appearance in works of pulp fiction bearing her name (Figure 5a) and the portrait paintings made of her by Miguel Omaña (Figure 5b). Clearly Lady Six

<sup>5</sup> However promising this reading may appear, based on the occurrence of the head-variant of that sign in the titular string of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, some caution must be exerted concerning the proposed decipherment. In the text of Stela 22, the head-variant appears to replace for the canonical **K'UH** logogram that prefixes the Emblem Glyph of Naranjo (E8), whereas on Stela 21 (A11) and 46 (C6), it occurs in its own glyph block as **u-T284v**, after the regnal name and preceding the complete emblem glyph. As such it appears to function as a consonant-initial logogram here rendered with a possessive prefix, or alternatively as an *u*-initial logogram, wherein the prefixed **u** sign serves as a phonetic complement. Any coherent decipherment of T284 in the name of Lady Six Sky will also have to tackle and resolve these signs in the nominal string of *K'ahk' Tiliw*.



**Table 1.** The historical highlights of the regency of Lady Six Sky and the reign of *K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk*. The dates presented here and in the following tables are expressed in the Julian calendar using the 584286 (GMT+1) correlation coefficient

Julian Date	Long Count	Historical Event
28 Aug. AD 682	9.12.10.5.12	Arrival of Lady Six Sky to Naranjo
04 Jan. AD 688	9.12.15.13.7	Birth of <i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
29 May AD 693	9.13.1.3.19	Accession of <i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
01 Mar. AD 695	9.13.3.0.0	Period-ending ceremony officiated by Lady Six Sky
05 Sep. AD 698	9.13.6.10.4	Attack on Ucanal by <i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
17 Apr. AD 699	9.13.7.3.8	Impersonation ceremony by Lady Six Sky
23 Jan. AD 702	9.13.10.0.0	Period-ending ceremony officiated by <i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
25 Mar. AD 706	9.13.14.4.2	Conquest of Yootz by <i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
20 Mar. AD 710	9.13.18.4.18	First of several attacks on Yaxha by <i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
02 Dec. AD 711	9.14.0.0.0	Period-ending ceremony officiated by <i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
19 Jun. AD 712	9.14.0.10.0	Accession of Ucanal king under the aegis of <i>K'ahk'Tiliw</i>
14 Jan. AD 713	9.14.1.2.9	Accession of Yootz king under the aegis of <i>K'ahk'Tiliw</i>
13 Feb. AD 713	9.14.1.3.19	Jubilee of <i>K'ahk'Tiliw</i> celebrating the first k'atun in office
24 Sep. AD 714	9.14.2.15.7	Attack on <i>Sakha'</i> by <i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
16 Nov. AD 714	9.14.3.0.0	Period-ending ceremony officiated by Lady Six Sky & <i>K'ahk'Tiliw</i>
31 Mar. AD 716	9.14.4.7.1	Dance pageant celebrated by <i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i> and <i>Yax Mayuy</i>
04 Apr. AD 716	9.14.4.7.5	Attack on unidentified site by <i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
10 Oct. AD 721	9.14.10.0.0	Period-ending ceremony officiated by Lady Six Sky and her son
14 Aug. AD 725	9.14.13.16.4	<i>K'ahk'Tiliw</i> , <i>Yax Mayuy</i> and another figure perform a joint action
11 Jan. AD 726	9.14.14.5.14	'Striking' event attributed to <i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
08 Feb. AD 726	9.14.14.7.2	<i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i> erects a stela in the presence of foreign kings
21 Apr. AD 726	9.14.14.10.14	Lady Six Sky & <i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i> wage a "star war" on <i>Komkom</i>
14 Sep. AD 726	9.14.15.0.0	Period-ending ceremony officiated by <i>K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i> and his mother

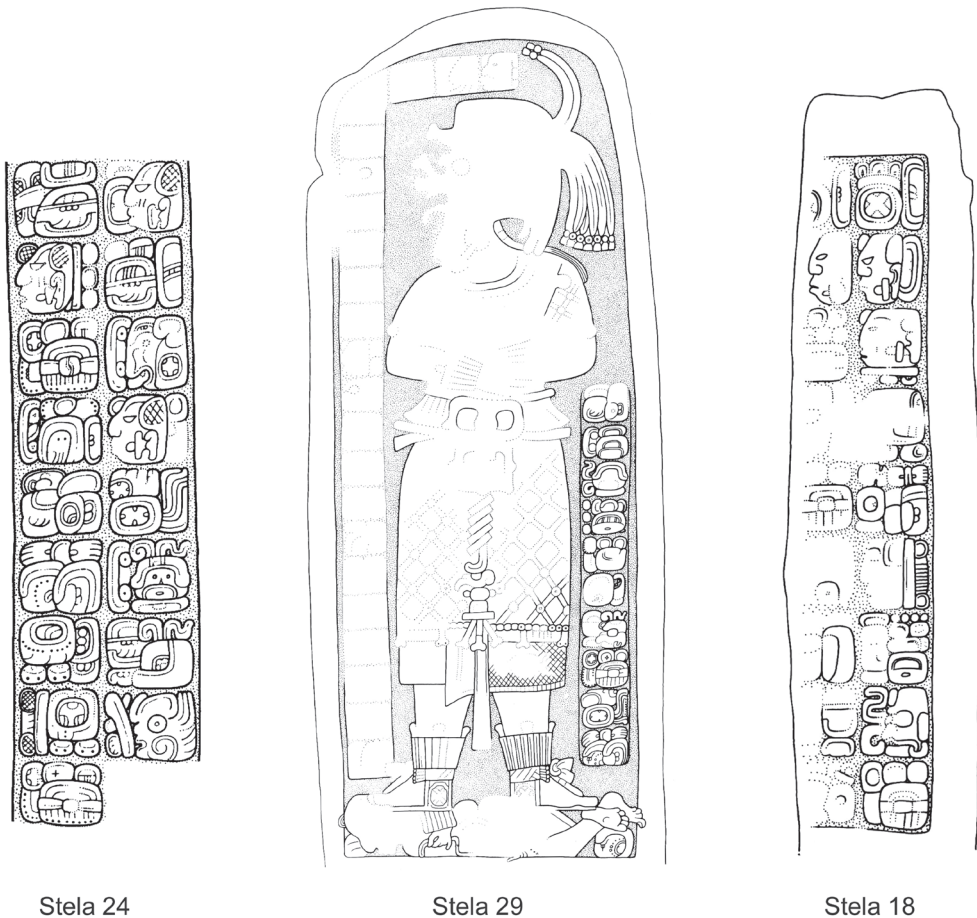


b

**Figure 5.** Modern depictions of Lady Six Sky. a) The cover of the Elaine Lowe's, *Lady Six Sky*, published in 2012 and b) the painting entitled “Lady Wac Chanil Ajaw, a Brave Maya Ruler”, rendered in 2009 by Miguel Omaña.

Sky is not only an inspiration as a strong and charismatic person, but also one perceived as sexually gregarious, considering that the portraits are partially nude and the novels published appear under the heading of “Adult Romance”.

However, before we immediately avail ourselves to reading cheap pulp fiction, we should consider the background and pedigree of Lady Six Sky. Given the importance that is attributed to women as the procreators of regal successors it should come as little surprise that statements of parentage and pedigrees are as numerous as they are in the Classic Maya corpus (see Vazquez López 2015: 134-177). Whereas some parentage statements append such low operative clauses as statements of ownership, such as the glyphs adorning a vase (see MacLeod and Reents-Budet 1994: 128-134), in most cases one could argue that pedigrees are expressed when need requires it, especially in situations wherein the contender to, or occupant of, the throne is not in the direct line of succession or is of a cadet line of the greater dynasty. In the case of Lady Six Sky, three of her monuments devote ample space to her pedigree (Houston and Mathews 1985: 14), stating unequivocally that she is the daughter of the Lady of *Bulu* who bore the exalted title of *Kalo'mte'* and the daughter of the king of Dos Pilas, *Bajlaj Chan K'awiil*, ‘he who has raised and axed, the divine *Mutu'l* king’ (Figure 6). As such we know that pedigrees were of great importance to her station as regent, underlying her noble birth and her status as princess of Dos Pilas, a title that she bore for the entirety of her regency, never adopting any of the



Stela 24

Stela 29

Stela 18

**Figure 6.** The monuments of Naranjo that manifestly record the pedigree of Lady Six Sky (after Graham and Von Euw 1975: 48, 64; Graham 1978: 77; © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM# 2004.15.6.2.47, 2004.15.6.3.8 and 2004.15.6.2.33).

local titles that were the prerogative of the Naranjo dynasty. As such it comes as a surprise that the parentage of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk* is almost entirely omitted, or at the very least deliberately deemphasized, on all of the extant monuments, even though we know that both his predecessors and successors often made recourse to their pedigree to reify their position and rightful claim.<sup>6</sup> This view

<sup>6</sup> Several years ago Matthew Looper (1992) suggested that a parentage expression is found on Stela 5, linking the name of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk* with that of Lady Six Sky. This particular text and its interpretation have several difficulties, however. For one, the name of Lady Six Sky (B3-B4) is clear enough and it is also clear that there must be a relationship glyph in the preceding block (B2). The name of *K'ahk' Tiliw* is not clear in the least, although a ruler of Naranjo whose regnal name starts with *K'ahk'* is plausible. Considering the line of reasoning presented below it is equally likely to have been *K'ahk' Tiliw* or *K'ahk' Yipiy Chan Chaahk* who was mentioned on this stela, especially since the calendrical information is weathered and unclear, although several solutions

has now been radically changed, with the discovery of Stela 46, which bears the clearest possible pedigree, naming Lady Six Sky as mother to *K’ahk’ Tiliw* and mentions an otherwise obscure figure of the Naranjo dynasty, styled with a full Emblem Glyph, as his father (Martin *et al.* 2017: 673-674). The apparent emphasis on the parentage statements of Lady Six Sky and the clear suppression of like statements for the majority of *K’ahk’ Tiliw*’s reign suggests that these are very deliberate actions, and not trivial oversights. In fact it is precisely because Lady Six Sky served as regent to rekindle the dynasty that one would expect to see the pedigree of *K’ahk’ Tiliw* invoked to ensure his place. As such, it is probably not coincidental that the first complete parentage is provided late in the reign of *K’ahk’ Tiliw*, in AD 726, after he had been on the throne for more than three decades. As such we can suspect that the father was of lesser status or drawn from a lesser faction of the court, otherwise, why the conspicuous silence? Many scholars have assumed that Lady Six Sky must be the mother of the king (Proskouriakoff 1960: 466, 1993: 72; Closs 1985: 66-68, 74-76; Schele and Freidel 1990: 187; Martin and Grube 2000: 75), a scenario that has now finally been borne out by the discovery of Stela 46. Yet the notable absence of a father figure in the texts implies that the young king may not have been heir apparent, if he ever was heir presumptive, and that placing him on the throne was fraught with difficulties between competing factions, each supporting different candidates to the throne in the aftermath of the turmoil of the First Hiatus. This leaves us with the impression of some sort of machination on the part of Lady Six Sky and it seems patent enough that she served as the dominant parental figure for much of his life, at the detriment of the father. Below I will go through the texts adorning the monuments of Lady Six Sky and *K’ahk’ Tiliw* with an eye to determining how these hint at both commonalities and dysfunctions in their uneasy relationship.

## NEGOTIATING POWER: THE UNEASY RELATIONSHIP OF LADY SIX SKY AND *K’AHK’ TILIW CHAN CHAAHK*

### Ascendency

One of the basic queries guiding this research is whether the extant monumental record and glyphic corpus can inform us to the type of regency that Lady Six Sky maintained. Was it one wherein she saw after the best interests of the monarch as a minor and eventually devolved all political powers to the incumbent upon majority? Or was it a Machiavellian regency wherein the child served the best interests of the regent and were the powers of the monarch curtailed and court intrigues maintained to better serve the regent’s own interests? While few will debate the validity of the term “regent” to describe Lady Six Sky in her capacity as guardian of *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaaahk* during his minority, we are none the wiser as to whether she should be regarded as queen regent. In this regard it is worth commenting on the few other documented regencies that we have for the ancient Maya. These involve the accessions of Tonina’s Ruler 4 (who acceded aged only two), *K’inich Hix Chapaahk* of the same site (acceded age eight), and the so-called Lady of Tikal (who acceded at the age of six) (Grube 2004a: 235-236). In these cases the identities and roles of the regents are not invisible in the epigraphic record, but are clearly more subdued than in the case of Naranjo, indicating that the regency of Lady Six Sky deviates from these precedents.

Lady Six Sky never bore the Emblem Glyph of Naranjo, and *K’ahk’ Tiliw* did assume the throne of Naranjo as the 38<sup>th</sup> in the dynastic succession, an important claim as to lineal and direct legitimacy,

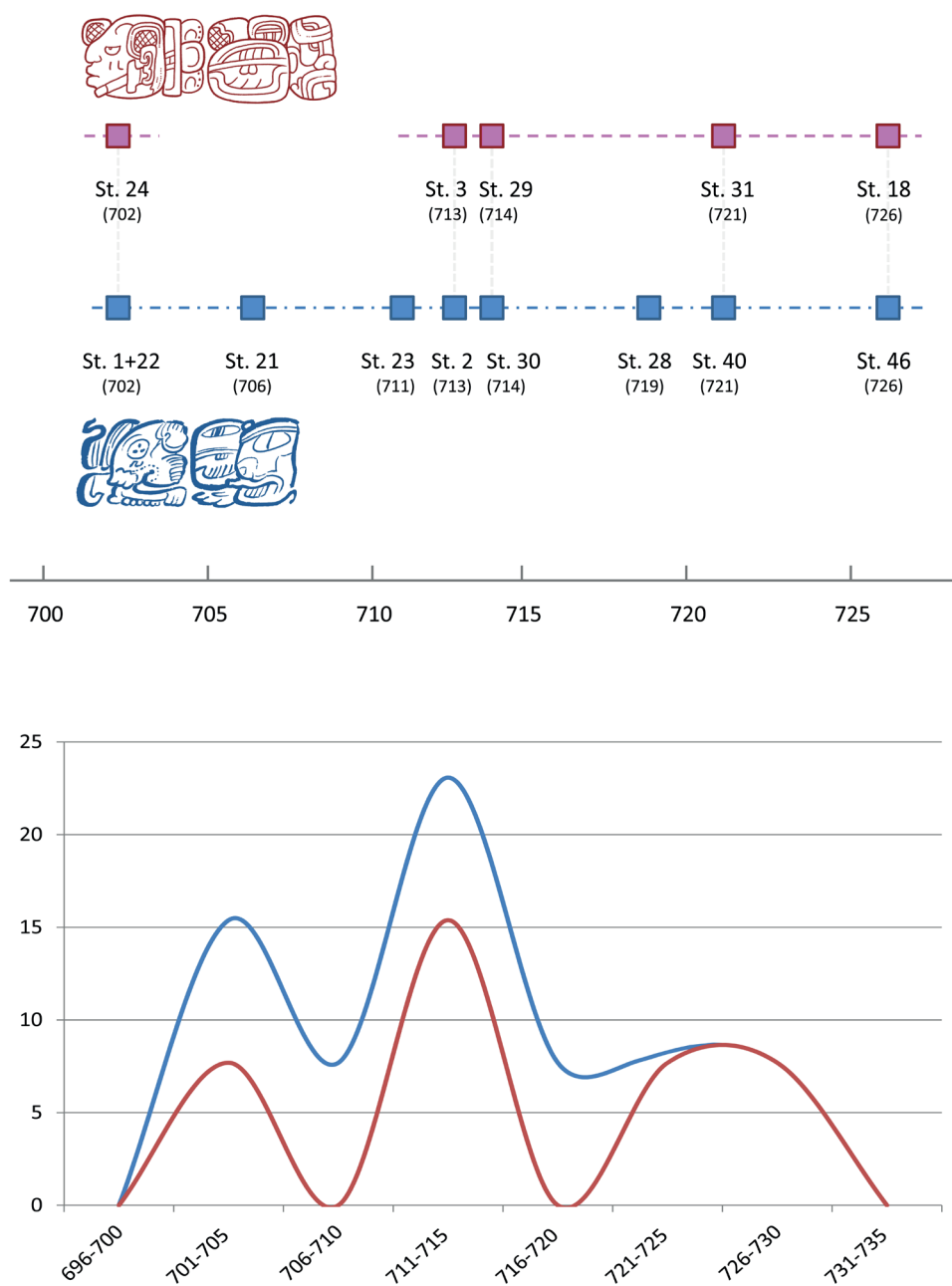
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present themselves, using a Calendar Round of 9 ? 1 Kumk’u, that range between AD 706 and 745 (Boguchwała Tuszyńska, pers. comm. 2016). As such, this monument cannot be taken as the incontrovertible source that it has been suggested to be.



although his relation to his father and dynastic predecessor are unclear, not the least since the regency of Lady Six Sky was preceded by a lengthy hiatus period. That being said, her arrival in AD 682 is just two years after the devastating defeat of *K'ahk' Xiiw Chan Chaahk* (r. c. AD 644–680+) at the hands of Caracol (Martin and Grube 2008: 73; Grube 2004b: 200; Grube and Martin 2004: 111). As such, plausible conclusions include: 1) that whereas Lady Six Sky served as guardian and assumed the role of a dominant maternal figure, she only had a tenuous place at the Naranjo court contingent on her spouse; 2) that *K'ahk' Tiliw* only had a very tenuous claim to the throne, although undoubtedly of noble birth, born of parents that were of relatively low stature at court, possibly distant relations to the royal family of *K'ahk' Xiiw Chan Chaahk* (r. c. AD 644–680+), the predecessor (Grube 2004b: 200; Martin and Grube 2008: 73); 3) that *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk* gained the throne through machinations orchestrated by Lady Six Sky, displacing erstwhile contenders and the proverbial old guard.

One means of examining the type of regency maintained by Lady Six Sky is to study the monumental record. This can be done by determining the latest date of each monument to approximate the date of erection, determining the patron of the monument by considering who is depicted on its front and scrutinising its textual passages to assess who is explicitly mentioned as the subject of clauses and agent of verbs. In so doing, it was found that the monuments erected in the name of Lady Six Sky and those dedicated by *K'ahk' Tiliw* could indeed be segregated and their temporal incidence plotted. Were the regency one wherein Lady Six Sky released the reins of power one would expect a clustering of monuments in the early part of the regency when *K'ahk' Tiliw* was a minor, followed by a cessation of monuments in her name and a sharp increase in the erection of monuments on the part of the king, especially upon majority and for the remainder of his rule. Any deviation from this idealised model will have to be explained and may serve as a proxy for human behaviour and can help to characterise the type of relationship that was maintained between these two figures. Having examined the monumental record from this vantage I can relate that there is a clear correlation between the person depicted on the front of a given monument and the number of times that the same individual is named in the accompanying texts. As a result it has been relatively easy to parse the monumental record between those of the regent and the king (Figure 7). Perhaps not all too surprisingly, part of the hypothesised model is replicated in the plots, as well as much to the contrary. Using these plots as proxies is quite illuminating since we can see that Lady Six Sky erected Stela 24 at the start of the record, and that she did not erect another monument for the following decade. During precisely the same stretch of time *K'ahk' Tiliw* also erected monuments at the start of the record, starting with the dedication of both Stelae 1 and 22, which was followed just four years after by Stela 21, five years after by Stela 23 and two years after by Stela 2. As such we can see that Lady Six Sky erected just one monument at the start of the record, which was followed by more than a decade of inactivity, and that in the same time period *K'ahk' Tiliw* erected as many as five monuments. This part of the record, which spans AD 702–713, matches more or less what is expected from what could be called a benevolent regency wherein *K'ahk' Tiliw* is allowed and enabled to assume power, whereas the regent progressively steps aside. However, from AD 713 onwards we can see that Lady Six Sky continues erecting monuments in her name, going on to raise at least four stelae in the following 13 years, whereas *K'ahk' Tiliw* raised five stelae during a commensurate period. As such the latter part of the monumental record does not speak of a regent that releases power, but quite the contrary, one that is bent on impressing her mark on history in direct competition to, and perhaps with flagrant disregard for, the king (Figure 7). This patterning does not speak of a healthy and mutually beneficial relationship, not the least when one considers that the regent's claim to power rests with the ability to govern a minor. This patterning is all the more distressing when one considers that the first monument of Lady Six Sky is raised no less than twenty years after her arrival to Naranjo, and in the case of *K'ahk' Tiliw*, at the age of 23, a whole nine years after his accession. Clearly *K'ahk' Tiliw* must have reached his majority by that juncture.



**Figure 7.** Top: The monumental record of Lady Six Sky and that of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, plotted discretely, illustrating the monuments they each have erected, as well as those erected conjointly (connected by vertical dashed lines). Bottom: Relative frequency distribution of the monuments erected by Lady Six Sky vs. those of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk*. Note the three distinct peaks, motivated in part by the Period Endings of 9.13.10.0.0, 9.14.0.0.0 and 9.14.10.0.0 (graphs and drawings by Christophe Helmke).

Stela Pairs

Since both Lady Six Sky and *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk* erected as many monuments as they did, it should not come as a surprise that some of these were erected at the same occasion. This happened a total of five different times, with all but one set of monuments commemorating relatively round Period Ending celebrations and one on an entirely historical date (Table 2). Of these chronologically coeval sets of monuments most of these form pairs, a feature that was first recognised by Proskouriakoff (1960: 464). What is interesting is that the pattern of erecting paired stelae is a feature that is well-known for Calakmul and sites that were allied to this great metropolis (Marcus 1987; see also Joyce 1996). For instance the pair formed by Stelae 28 and 29 at Calakmul show the reigning monarchs in AD 623, both standing victorious atop captives, wearing rich regalia, the king conducting a scattering ritual and the queen bearing a bicephalic sceptre (Marcus 1987: 135-147, Fig. 48). Similarly, the stelae pair stemming from El Perú—but now forcibly divorced between the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Kimbell Art Museum—show the reigning couple, the king with a deity mask brandishing a sceptre and a shield, much like his spouse (Miller 1974). What stands out from just these two pairs is that the woman in each case wears the so-called netted skirt as well as the spiny oyster shell and shark belt assemblage, an integral part of the Maize god’s regalia, especially following his resurrection in the underworld (see Helmke 2012: 111-113; Helmke and Kupprat 2016: 46, 60-62; Houston *et al.* 1992: 500; Quenon and Le Fort 1997; Vázquez López 2015: 184-195). In addition, in casting a slighter wider net, we can see that such stelae pairs are known from Calakmul, Naachtun, Oxpemul, Uxul, El Perú and Yaxchilan and that these systematically represent spouses (Tuszyńska 2016: 248-256).

The one great exception to this pattern are the paired stelae of Naranjo, where these appear to represent a younger male ruler and a dominant mother acting as regent. Examining the iconography of these stelae as well as their placement within the city tells another story, which again I believe is relevant to our understanding of the complicated relationship maintained between regent and king.

The pairing of stelae at Naranjo, as first noticed by Proskouriakoff (1960: 464-465; see also Grube 2004b: 202), consists of three initial pairs, to which the two additional and later sets are herewith added that heretofore had gone unnoticed (Table 2). The first set, or pair, of stelae also serves to

**Table 2.** The paired stelae erected during the regency of Lady Six Sky and the reign of *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk* in chronological order

Julian date	Long Count	Monument	Protagonist
23 Jan. AD 702	9.13.10.0.0	Stela 22	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
		Stela 24	Lady Six Sky
13 Feb. AD 713	9.14.1.3.19	Stela 2	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
		Stela 3	Lady Six Sky
16 Nov. AD 714	9.14.3.0.0	Stela 30	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
		Stela 29	Lady Six Sky
10 Oct. AD 721	9.14.10.0.0	Stela 40	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
		Stela 31	Lady Six Sky
14 Sep. AD 726	9.14.15.0.0	Stela 46	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>
		Stela 18	Lady Six Sky

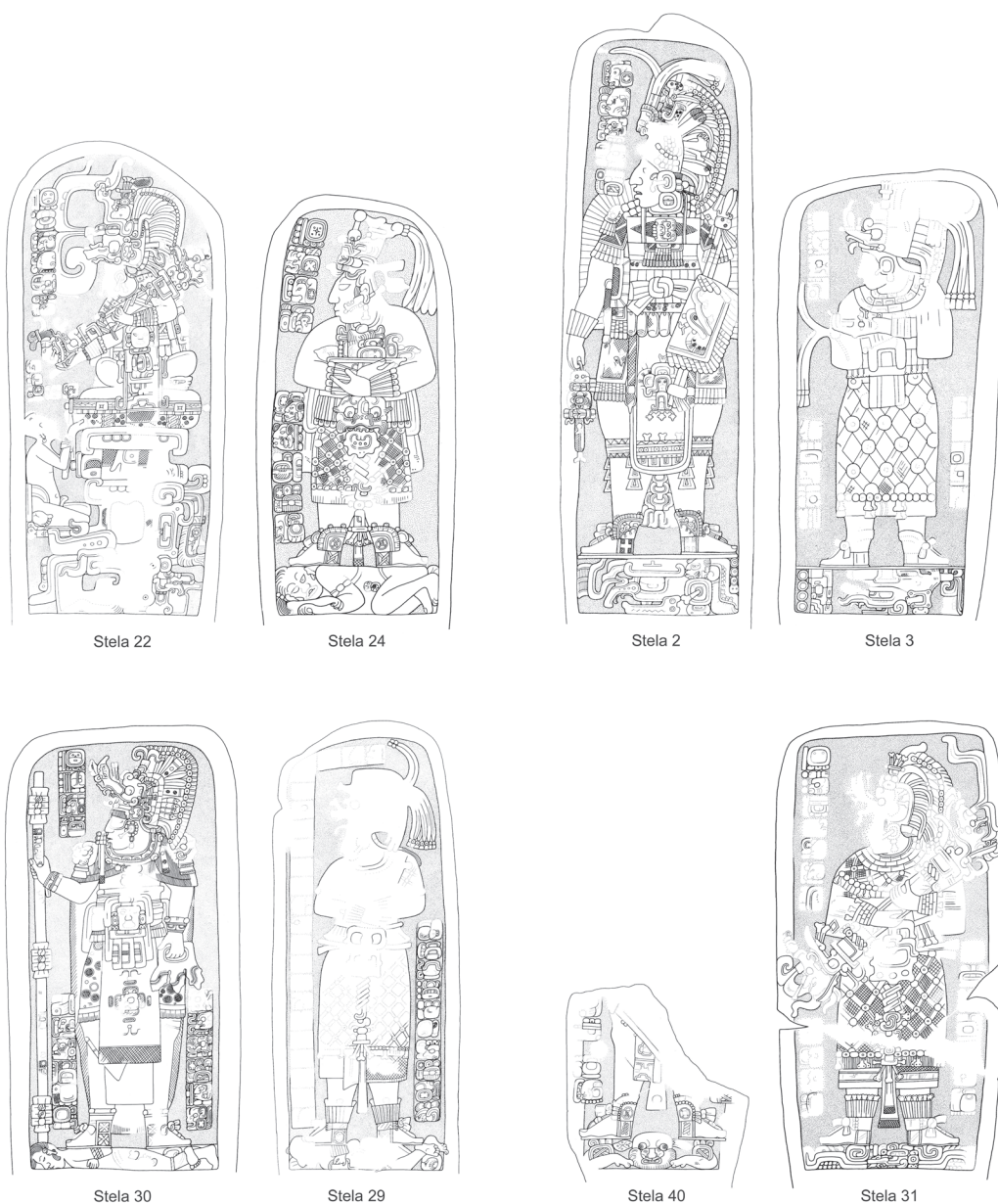
inaugurate the extant monumental record as we know it (Figure 8). On Stela 22 we see a victorious *K'ahk' Tiliw* seated atop a large and stately pillow embellished by jaguar skin the whole atop a large personified toponym, which names the prominent triadic temples of the C Group at the eastern end of the monumental epicenter (see Tokovinine and Fialko 2007: 8-9). He braces a bicephalic ceremonial bar and peers down on a nearly nude and emaciated captive, whose caption informs us that he is the 'powerless' king of Ucanal (Schele and Freidel 1990: 190-191; Zender 1999: 126-127; Helmke and Kettunen 2011: 45-46). Stela 24, Lady Six Sky's counterpart monument, depicts her also in a victorious stance, standing atop a defeated captive whose glyphic caption relates that he is from *K'inichil Chab*, a locality that is said to have been defeated in both AD 693 and 698. She is also shown holding a large ceremonial dish, containing the implements of auto-sacrifice as well as additional glyphic elements, naming an underworld locality (Proskouriakoff 1993: 72; Tokovinine and Fialko 2007: 7; Helmke 2009: 98-100). The form of the dish suggests that it is a cache vessel that in due course was buried into the architectural core of a structure, as a dedicatory offering. The associated caption makes it clear that Lady Six Sky is portrayed in the act of impersonating a deity, in this particular case—perhaps not too surprisingly—the Moon goddess (see Houston and Stuart 1996: 297-300; Grube and Martin 2004: 111; Nehammer Knub *et al.* 2009: 185-186; Houston 2012) (see also Figure 1b-c). As such we see a symbolic emulation, and can recall that the much celebrated 'arrival' of Lady Six Sky is taken as a point of analogy to the heavenly travels of the Moon goddess. In addition to impersonating this deity while performing important ritual actions that serve to rededicate one of the most prominent ceremonial loci at Naranjo (Schele and Freidel 1990: 184; Martin and Grube 2000: 74; Grube 2004b: 201) she is also clearly shown wearing the netted skirt, as well as the shark's head and spiny oyster shell (*Spondylus* sp.) as her belt assemblage. Together these items of dress evoke those worn by the Maize god at his resurrection and underlines the androgynous features of the Maize god—which has often provoked confusion between the head-variant for *ixik* 'woman' and *ixim* the personification of mature maize in Classic Maya writing (see Zender 2014a). This feature is fundamental to the stelae pairs observed at sites throughout the Lowlands, and it is therefore noteworthy to remark that all extant depictions of Lady Six Sky at Naranjo appear to show her wearing such a netted dress.

The second set of paired stelae depicts, what may be Lady Six Sky on Stela 3, again with the netted dress and although the object that she holds is eroded and indistinct, it can be said to resemble a bloodletter, the handle of which is embellished by a spray of long feathers, presumably those of the quetzal bird. Both she and *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk* on the companion monument are standing atop toponyms, written in a combination of glyphs and head-variant signs. On Stela 2, *K'ahk' Tiliw* is again depicted in keeping with martial themes, this time as a central Mexican warrior-priest, replete with a series of items of regalia that are typical of this title<sup>7</sup> as well as an incense pouch, a tell-tale sign of an individual with sacerdotal duties.

The third pair is that formed by Stelae 29 and 30, wherein the former depicts Lady Six Sky again in a ritual act, although the caption that would have commented on the portrayal is sadly lost. Much as with Stela 24 she is standing atop of a captive, a stance that is decidedly martial and emulates the prerogative of kings (Martin and Grube 2000: 74; Grube and Martin 2004: 125). Likewise, on Stela 30,

<sup>7</sup> The items include: the shell-platelet headdress adorned with eagle feathers, a typically Mexican square shield emblazoned with a blood-thirsty butterfly, a motif repeated on his high-backed sandals, his footwear also featuring *k'an* cross signs, denoting the diagnostic element of the martial incarnation of the Teotihuacan Storm god (the precursor of the Aztec rain deity *Tlaalok*) (see Wrem Anderson and Helmke 2013: 186-187, Fig. 10e-f) and finally, the large serpentine figure rendered on his loincloth, known as the Teotihuacan War Serpent (see Taube 2004: 88, 2006: 161), in the act of devouring a stylised heart that is shown dripping with blood. It is this last element that glyphically spells out the title in question, one that finds its origin in Teotihuacan, but flourished in the central Mexican highlands during the Epiclassic (AD 650-950) (see Helmke and Nielsen 2011: 25-28).





**Figure 8.** The paired stelae of Naranjo, arranged into four distinct sets, erected respectively in AD 702, 713, 714 and 721 (after Graham and Von Euw 1975: 13, 17, 55, 63, 77, 79, 83, 101; © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM# 2004.15.6.2.39, 2004.15.6.2.45, 2004.15.6.2.4, 2004.15.6.2.7, 2004.15.6.3.10, 2004.15.6.2.33, 2004.15.6.3.21, 2004.15.6.3.12). The final set of AD 726, represented by Stelae 18 and 46 is not illustrated here.

*K’ahk’ Tiliw* is shown standing atop a trampled captive, though here he is performing a nocturnal rite, involving a fire-drilling ritual, which explains the large staff with the clusters of knotted cloth, an outsized emulation of the pins used to drill fire as part of such rituals (see Grube 2000). The large trident eccentric flint that he holds in his left hand may also be related to fire rituals, as an object that was struck to create sparks, although this is conjectural. The associated glyphic captions makes it clear that he is undertaking these rituals as part of an impersonation ritual, in this case taking on the guise of the so-called Jaguar God the Underworld, a prominent patron deity of Naranjo (see Helmke *et al.* 2010: 104-105; Nehammer Knub *et al.* 2009: 191-192).

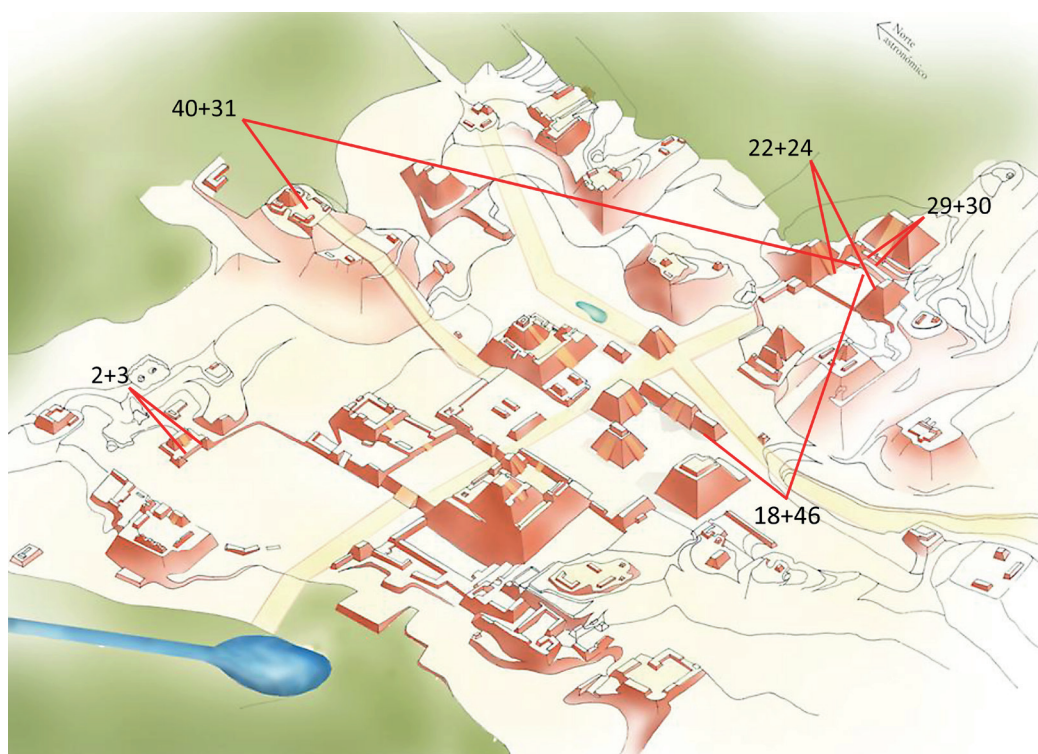
The fourth and penultimate set, is herewith identified and involves Stela 31 and the base of Stela 40. The latter could be identified to form part of this set, since its eroded caption records the dedication of a half-k’atun celebration (Ap1-Ap2), and as such the Long Count should record a date conforming to this format: 9.?.10.0.0. Considering the known dates of the regency and reign, the best match is that provided by 9.14.10.0.0 or October AD 721. On this date, the female half shows what may be Lady Six Sky holding a large bicephalic ceremonial bar, standing atop a personified toponym.

The fifth and final set, comprises Stela 18 and the recently discovered Stela 46, both commemorating the 9.14.15.0.0 Period Ending of AD 726. The front of Stela 18 has not survived, but considering the many mentions to Lady Six Sky one can presume that it once depicted her and was a monument raised at her behest. In contrast, Stela 46 mentions predominantly *K’ahk’ Tiliw* and depicts him brandishing a *K’awil* sceptre in his right hand and a circular shield in his left, the potent symbols of royal power and martial prowess. Duplicating some of the earlier monuments, *K’ahk’ Tiliw* is shown standing atop a personified toponym, once more naming the triadic C Group (see Martin *et al.* 2017: 673).

Allowing for these stelae as a textual linguistic source, and considering their location, placement and context, the narrative provided by these may articulate a wealth of information about the tumultuous relationship between the young king and the dominant maternal regent (Figure 9). The very first set involves Stelae 22 and 24, which were erected at the base of Str. C-6 and C-7, respectively, the two temples that define the northern and southern extent of the important triadic C Group. This is the group where Lady Six Sky is said to have undertaken the foundation rituals that reasserted the paramount importance of these temples to the Naranjo dynasty, and also appears to be the place where *K’ahk’ Tiliw* is seated upon on Stela 22.<sup>8</sup> As such, this stela set is of great import on many levels since it represents a salient continuity with the past and a concerted means of solemnly celebrating the more recent monarchs at the site. The two monuments, their texts and image play off each and are wholly complementary. However, in what may be an attempt at decorum, Stelae 22 and 24 were not erected side-by-side as is the norm for stela pairs, perhaps as a means of avoiding commentary on the fact that *K’ahk’ Tiliw* and Lady Six Sky were not spouses, since stela pairs at other sites are all of the ruling couple, king and queen (see Joyce 1996: Table 6.2).

The following pair, erected eleven years later, was raised not within the C-Group, but at the opposite western end of the site, at the foot of the rather diminutive Str. A-15. Interestingly, Str. A-15, along with A-14 and A-16 may form a diminutive triadic group, but if size is any indication, then this group may have been raised during the regency of Lady Six Sky. Much more boldly, Stelae 2 and 3, were erected side-by-side, which is highly indicative of an unhealthy relationship between individuals of different generations, in what is a mother-child relationship. Clearly, Lady Six Sky’s regency rested wholly on the influence she could exert on the young king and the relationship she could maintain with him, and in the absence of a clear father to the king, and spouse to Lady Six Sky from the local dynasty,

<sup>8</sup> Based on associated texts this group appears to have been called *Wak Ik’ ...nal Hu’un* (Tokovinine and Fialko 2007: 8), wherein the intervening ellipsis refers to an undeciphered logogram that represents a vessel marked with a hand sign.



**Figure 9.** Isometric map of the monumental epicentre of Naranjo, showing the contextual distribution of paired stelae and their architectural settings (isometric map adapted after Martin *et al.* 2016: Fig. 2).

her position was precarious indeed. As such, it would seem that Lady Six Sky perceived and in many ways treated *K'ahk' Tiliw* as her spouse, although whether this was deliberate and conscious or not, is unknown. If the latter, then this speaks of a type of psychological dysfunction wherein the child is expected to assume some of the roles of a peer-generational husband. Relevant terms to describe such unhealthy relations are enmeshment, parentification, surrogate spouse, covert incest (also known as emotional incest) and the Jocasta Complex (the incestuous sexual desire of a mother towards her son), describing a range of psychological problems (see Besdine 1968; Olivier 1989).<sup>9</sup>

Raised the very next year and following the pattern seen with the second pair of stelae, the third set, was also erected side-by-side, but this time it was erected, pride of place, at the foot of Str. C-9, the eastern and largest of the temples of the triadic C Group. As such, if these types of pairs were reserved for those in wedlock, then the erection of two paired stelae does appear to suggest some sort of dysfunctional relation. Interesting in this regard is the fact that standard stelae pairs depict spouses that face one another, but in the case of Lady Six Sky and *K'ahk' Tiliw*, these all face to their right, and

<sup>9</sup> Covert incest typically occurs in families where one parent (the shadow parent) does not actively participate in family affairs, thus setting the stage for the other parent (the invasive parent) to turn to a child for emotional support. The invasive parent in effect makes the child a surrogate spouse who is forced to take on the responsibilities of the shadow parent (Freil and Freil 1988; Love 1991).

as such do not look toward each other. Whereas one might be tempted to interpret this in light of the relationship between our two protagonists, there is a dominant pattern of uniformity in the sculptural arts of Naranjo wherein ruling figures face to their right (Ivan Savchenko, pers. comm. 2015), and as such this reflects more the local canons as well as the aspirations of Lady Six Sky to be viewed in this light and treated as ruler.

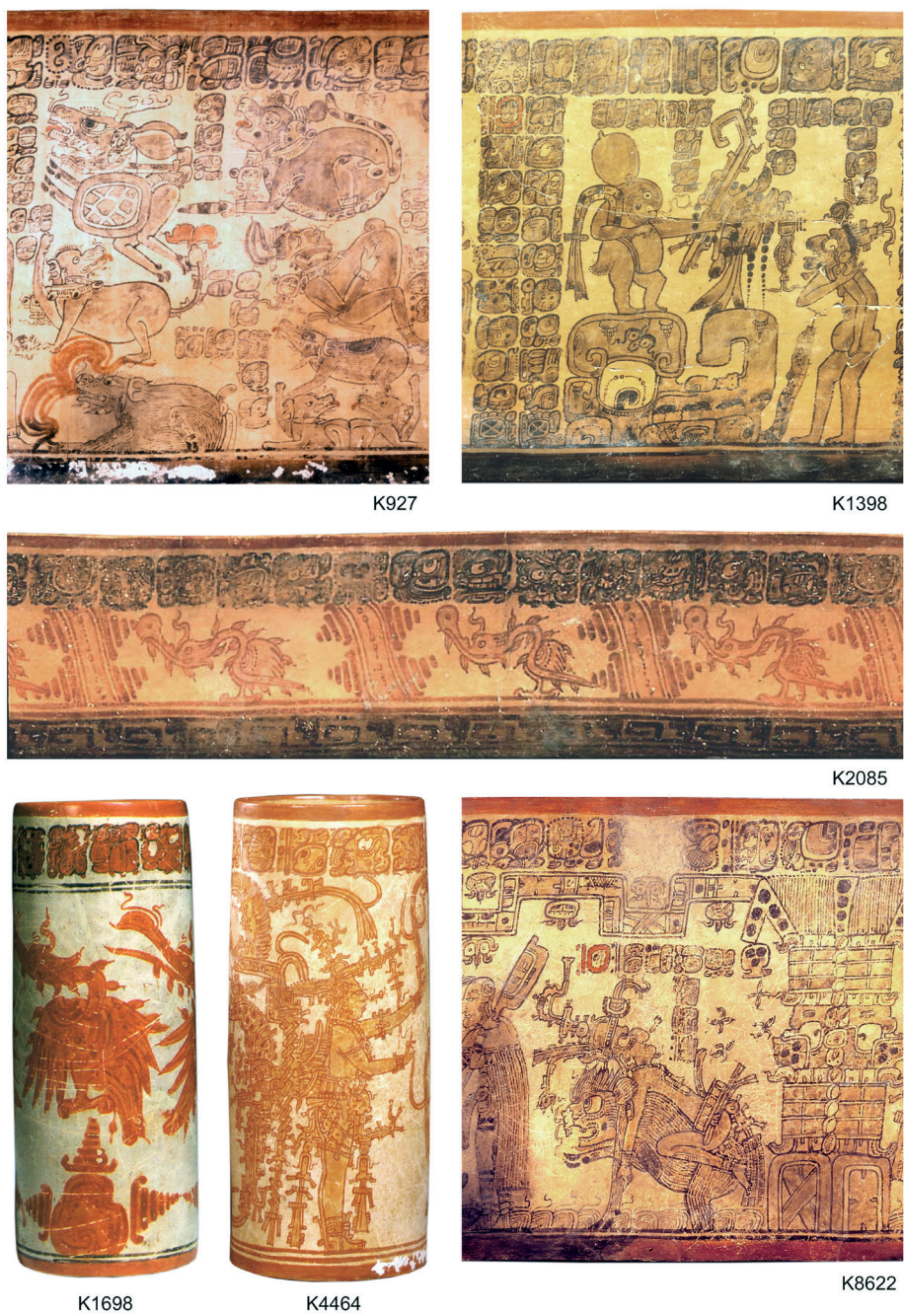
The fourth set of monuments was only raised 12 years after the penultimate one, and of these Lady Six Sky had Stela 31 erected at the foot of Str. C-9, duplicating the setting of her stela in the penultimate pair, and confirming her affinity to this particular ritual complex. In contrast, *K’ahk’ Tiliw* selected a completely different location for his stela, since it was erected at the foot of Str. D-1, the causeway terminus complex built atop of the flattened hill to the north of the site, named *Pek Sa’uul* in antiquity. That terminus was of great importance to the long-reigning Early Classic ruler *Ajasaaj Chan K’inich*, since he erected both Stela 38 and Altar 1 at this location (Martin and Grube 2000: 71; Helmke and Kettunen 2011: 6-15). As such, raising Stela 40 at this location shows a deliberate attempt to commune with *Ajasaaj* and his legacy, but importantly, it shows a definite and decided break from Lady Six Sky. The paired monument would not be erected besides hers and proximity would not be tolerated, as though an attempt to break free and rid himself of the overbearing maternal presence and looming shadow of Lady Six Sky. As we will see, there are some elements in the texts of these stelae that support this overall scenario.

The fifth and final set, continues some of the trends seen with the forth, notably the disassociation of the pair. Lady Six Sky erected her stela at the foot of the southern platform of Structure B20, facing the central plaza, whereas *K’ahk’ Tiliw* saw his monument erected once more in the triadic C Group. The erection of Stela 46 in the C Group saw, much as with Stela 22 erected 24 years prior, the representation of the toponym of this place on the front of the stelae, indicative of the importance of place in both ritual and representational practices. Whereas this review of the placement of stelae suggests several important patterns, and may betray some of the aspects of the relation maintained between mother and son, regent and king, the importance of the C Group to both is clear, since the majority of their stelae were erected there, although not always as a picture of wholesome unison.

## Narrative and Discourse

The reign of *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk* can be divided into several salient and overlapping phases. In the initial period, spanning roughly from AD 693–702, especially during his minority and the regency, is characterised by a broad array of military engagements, many to subjugate former allies, to regain adjoining territory that was formerly part of Naranjo and also for establishing tributary relations farther afield (Schele and Freidel 1990: 186-193; Martin and Grube 2000: 76; Grube and Martin 2004: 118-125; Helmke and Kettunen 2011: 39-51). This phase of intensive martial encounters with Naranjo’s neighbours was followed by a period of greater stability and one wherein a ruler in his majority sought to solidify alliances and re-establish the grandeur of Naranjo, seeking as inspiration the deeds of the revered *Ajasaaj Chan K’inich*. During this second phase, which can be said to span from AD 712–721, we see the ceramic workshops of Naranjo once more rise to prominence by producing a large number of unique masterpieces, many for local consumption bearing the name of *K’ahk’ Tiliw*, but others were specifically designed to be gifted as part of feasts that would serve to cement alliances and ensure the fealty of vassals (e.g. LeCount 2001) (Figure 10). The Jauncy vase discovered at Buenavista del Cayo in Belize (Houston *et al.* 1992), as well as sherds of identical vases discovered at both Xunantunich and Baking Pot, attest to the influence exerted on this part of the Maya Lowlands by *K’ahk’ Tiliw* during this part of his reign. In addition, a customised vase, bearing the name of the king of Ucanal, defeated in AD 698 and depicted as a gaunt skeletal figure on Stela 22, shows the capriciousness of political interactions at the time, not the least since *K’ahk’ Tiliw* is said to





**Figure 10.** A selection of polychromatic ceramic vessels produced in the royal workshop of Naranjo, during the reign of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk*. K927, 1398, 2085, and 4464 all bear the names and titles of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, whereas 1698 and 8622 were produced for the king of Ucanal and an individual from the neighbouring *uxlajuun tzuk* or '13 province' (photographs © Justin Kerr, reproduced with permission).

have supervised the accession of an Ucanal king in AD 712.<sup>10</sup> As such we can infer that the vase was produced as a means of securing an alliance following the military engagement and was therefore likely produced sometime between AD 698 and 712. Similarly, following the defeat of *Yootz* in AD 706, a local ruler was enthroned under the auspices of *K’ahk’ Tiliw* in AD 713. At around the same time a service of finely painted ceramics was also produced, quite possibly celebrating the rapprochement between Naranjo and *Yootz* (Boot 1999) in the latter part of *K’ahk’ Tiliw*’s reign (Grube and Martin 2004: 129–130; Helmke and Kettunen 2011: 51–52).

Despite the growing tension that can be read from the glyphic texts, much of the established literature ends the narrative rather abruptly at this climax in the story, and the final decades of Lady Six Sky’s rule and that of *K’ahk’ Tiliw* are as if swept aside (see Martin and Grube 2000: 77; Grube and Martin 2004: 141). Why would this be the case? For one, the monuments from the latter phase, which we might call a third phase following the period of increasing diplomatic relations, is plagued by a complete absence of monuments from AD 726 onwards and the few monuments that once exhibited long texts are now almost completely eroded. Salient examples of this situation are the texts on the back of Stelæ 28 and 31, which were significant on account of their length, once filled with information pertaining to the latter part of the reign, but now unfortunately very little remains legible in these texts. Despite weathering, it has been possible to reconstruct much of the calendrical information in these texts and to segregate the clauses from one another. This, coupled with access to photographs secured by Sylvanus Morley in 1921 (Figure 11), before these monuments had weathered further to the sorry state that Ian Graham found them in the 1970s—reduced to illegible heaps as well as looted and displaced to a variety of locations—has enabled me to discern some elements that heretofore remained unclear.

For instance, a careful examination of the eroded texts of Stelæ 28 and 31 both reveal the occurrence of like-in-kind events, wherein *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk* and Lady Six Sky liken their actions and the rituals that they commemorated to similar events in the past (see also Closs 1985: 72–73; Helmke *et al.* 2006: 15–17) (Figure 12). In a discourse analysis of the Naranjo texts from the late seventh and eighth centuries I have reconstructed the chronological sequence of the monuments and determined the patron and major protagonist of each monument, by examining the portrait depicted on the front of the monument as well as the references made to agents within the associated texts (Table 3). Concerning the texts a few comments are in order, since I have had to concentrate on sentences where an agent is explicitly stated or wherein agency expressions are appended as sub-clauses to introduce the agent. As it turns out, the majority of sentences have only one argument, and in many cases this is the patient of a verb, such as in the passive and mediopassive voice of transitive constructions; as such, these sentences have figured less prominently in the discourse analysis. Despite these difficulties we can see that there is an intimate correlation between the subject depicted on the front of a monument and textual patterns of predominance, such that the main protagonist of a monument is cited more often than any other (Table 3). In this respect it is worthwhile remarking that in the monuments of *K’ahk’ Tiliw* he is cited as agent in 72 % of agential clauses (on average) and in half of the cases he appears as sole protagonist of a particular monument. Similarly, in the monuments of Lady Six Sky, she appears as agent in between 50–80 % of agential clauses, although she never appears as sole agent.<sup>11</sup> The reason for this is that *K’ahk’ Tiliw* is cited in all her texts, since he is the very basis for her

<sup>10</sup> Is this the enthronement of the successor to “Itzamnaaj” *Bahlam*, who had been captured in AD 698, or is this a re-enthronement of the same individual, as vassal of Naranjo, following his defeat? The remaining outlines of the name are certainly suggestive and do lend themselves to supporting the latter scenario, especially as the final part of the name appears to be ... *Bahlam*.

<sup>11</sup> As such we can observe a weak negative correlation ( $r = -0.55$ ) between the number of times that *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk* is mentioned vs. the number of times Lady Six Sky is mentioned in a given text. Thus, as the high





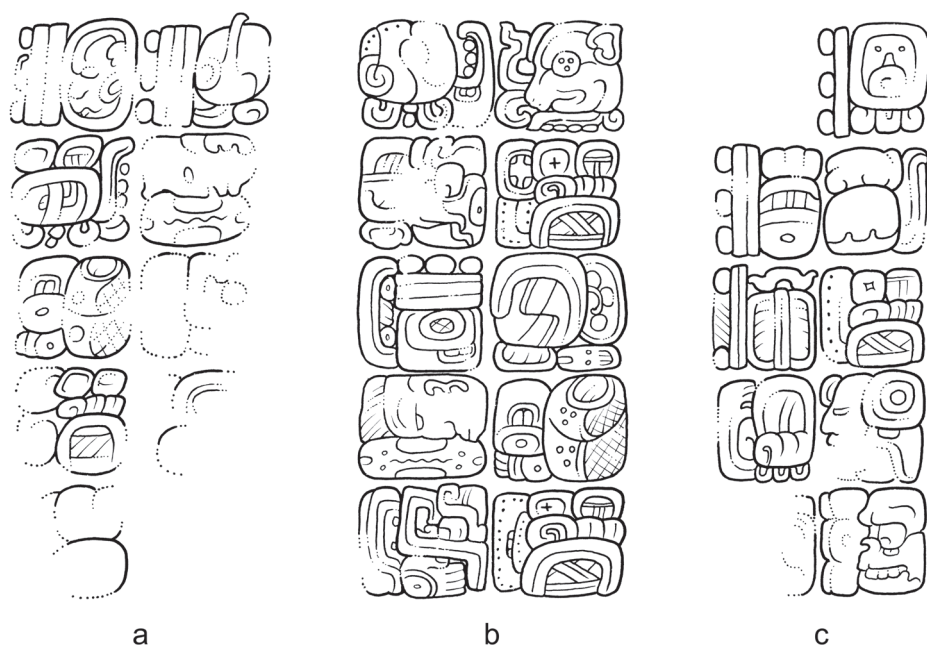
**Figure 11.** The long text adorning the back of Stela 31 at Naranjo, showing its condition in 1921 (photograph by Sylvanus Morley; gift of the Carnegie Institution of Washington © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, PM# 58-34-20/65922).

claims to power, but apparently the young king was not keen to return the compliment, since he seems to deliberately avoid mention of her on his monuments (especially between AD 702 and 714). A glaring exception in this regard comes in AD 719 is Stela 28, where Lady Six Sky appears to be mentioned, and with Stela 46, from the end of his reign this trend is exacerbated since his mother is mentioned several times in the same text in addition to the explicit parentage statement (Table 3). What this analysis of the monuments reveals is the measure to which these indeed provide parallel records and how these reflect the tenuous relationship between the two most prominent figures of the Naranjo court.

In addition, the earliest texts of the monumental record, in addition to naming *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk* and Lady Six Sky, also make reference to the founder of the Naranjo dynasty, one nicknamed the “Square Nosed Beastie” (Martin and Grube 2000: 70, 71-72; Schele 1992: 140-141) (Figure 12a-b). These references both date to AD 702 and offer narratives that stretch all the way back to mythological times, since the texts in question provide huge distance numbers, one going back

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numbers increase, the lower ones have a tendency to decrease, and the inflated mentions made to themselves on their respective monuments are not closely correlated with the few times they name the other. In contrast we can also see that Lady Six Sky is not mentioned in the monuments of *K'ahk' Tiliw* in the first 26 years of his reign, a situation that changes noticeably in the last course of his reign (see Table 3).



**Figure 12.** A selection of clauses naming the “Square-Nosed Beastie”, the mythic dynastic founder of Naranjo, and a reference made to *Ajasaaj Chan K’inich* in the monuments of Lady Six Sky and *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk*: a) Detail of Stela 1 (E11-F15), relating the accession of the dynastic founder in deep mythic time. b) Detail of Stela 24 (B13-C17), recording the birth of *K’ahk’ Tiliw*, wherein he is named as 38<sup>th</sup> successor of the dynastic founder. c) Detail of Stela 31 (J7-J11), commemorating a “paw-and-pillow” event conducted by *Ajasaaj* in AD 564 (drawings by Christophe Helmke).



more than 895 000 years into the past<sup>12</sup> (Martin and Grube 2000: 70) (Figure 12a). Thus, as Lady Six Sky was attempting to rekindle the Naranjo dynasty there are purposeful mentions to the mythic dynastic founder, betraying the underlying message of these Late Classic monuments, in a more subtle fashion than is at first apparent. Fascinatingly, a little over a decade later, the dynastic founder loses his preferential status only to be supplanted in the texts, between AD 713 and 726, by mentions to the embodiment of longevity: the Early Classic king, *Ajasaaj Chan K’inich* (Table 3). As such we see a clear discursive break in the written record.

It could well be that the throne was deemed secure and less time was therefore spent on rhetoric surrounding the dynastic (re)founding with the discourse now shifting to ambitions of extensive and

<sup>12</sup> The monuments raised at Naranjo concur that the dynastic founder acceded to the throne on the Calendar Round date of 12 Ok 13 K’ank’in. This date is attested on both Altar 1, raised during the reign of *Ajasaaj* as well as on Stela 1 that was raised by *K’ahk’ Tiliw* (see Figure 12a). On Altar 1, the narrative starts with this fundamental event, and goes on to relate to another quasi-mythic event in 257 BC (Helmke and Kettunen 2011: 6). On the side of Stela 1, the distance number that ties the mythic precedent to historical time can be reconstructed as 5.13.10.13.15.7.10, which corresponds to 326 979 150 days, or 895 200 years (Helmke and Kettunen 2011: 38). These figures would place the accession of the dynastic founder deep in mythic time on the Long Count date of 12.17.13.8.8.10.10.



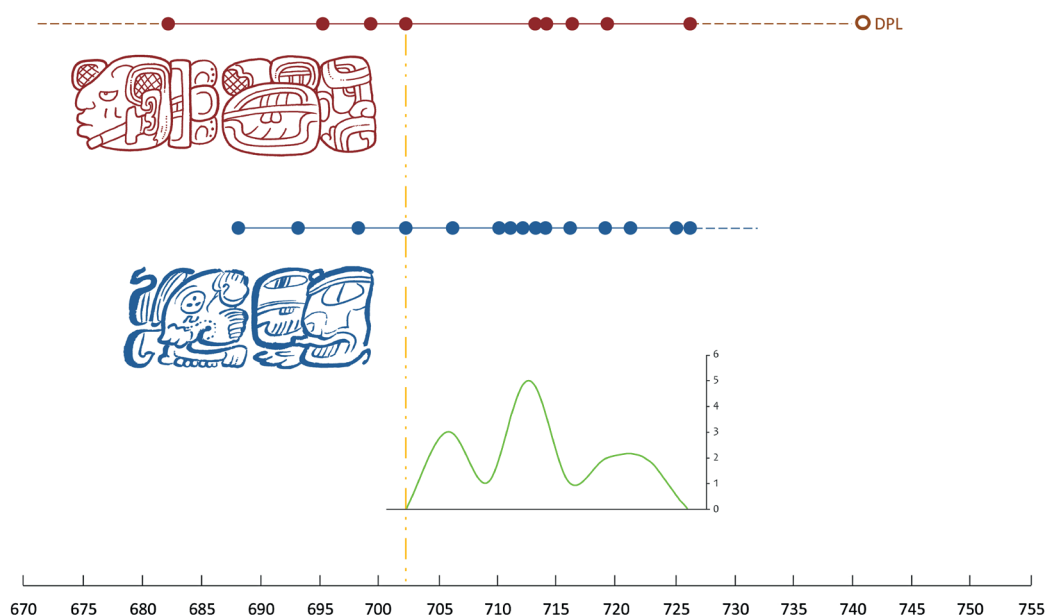
**Table 3.** A chronological tabulation of the monuments raised during the regency of Lady Six Sky and the reign of *K’ahk’ Tiliw*. The monuments are listed according to latest Long Count date recorded as well as correlated Julian dates, each identified as to the main protagonist, on the basis of the figure portrayed on the front, as well as the textual references made to each, as well as mentions made to early dynastic figures, including the “Square-Nosed Beastie” (SNB), the mythic founder

Monument	Portrait	Mon. Latest date	Gregorian date	<div><div>K’ahk’ Tiliw mentions</div><div>Lady Six Sky mentions</div><div>SNB mentions</div><div>Ajasaaj mentions</div></div>			
Stela 1	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>	9.13.10.0.0	23 Jan. 702	2	0	1	
Stela 22	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>	9.13.10.0.0	23 Jan. 702	4	0	1	
Stela 24	Lady Six Sky	9.13.10.0.0	24 Jan. 702	1	4	1	
Strla 21	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>	9.13.15.0.0	28 Dec. 706	2	#		
Stela 23	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>	9.14.0.0.0	02 Dec. 711	5	0		
Stela 2	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>	9.14.1.3.9	03 Feb. 713	3	0		
Stela 3	Lady Six Sky	9.14.1.3.9	03 Feb. 713	2	2		
Stela 30	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>	9.14.3.0.0	16 Nov. 714	8	0		
Stela 29	Lady Six Sky	9.14.3.0.0	16 Nov. 714	1	4		
Stela 28	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>	9.14.8.0.0	21 Oct. 719	3	1?	1	
Stela 40?	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>	9.14.10.0.0?	10 Oct. 721?	1	#	1	
Stela 31	Lady Six Sky	9.14.10.0.0	10 Oct. 721	3	4	1	
Stela 18	Lady Six Sky?	9.14.15.0.0	14 Sep. 726	?	1	1	
Stela 18b	—	9.14.15.0.0	14 Sep. 726	3	3?	1	
Stela 46	<i>K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk</i>	9.14.15.0.0	14 Sep. 726	4	3	1	

prestigious reigns, finding stimulus in the longest-reigning monarch of the dynasty, who sat on the throne at least 69 years (Martin and Grube 2000: 71; Grube 2004b: 197). Whereas the references to the dynastic founder are tied to *K’ahk’ Tiliw*, many of the references to *Ajasaaj Chan K’inich* are on the monuments of Lady Six Sky, and one example found on Stela 28 of *K’ahk’ Tiliw* is in a context wherein he likens a ritual event celebrated by Lady Six Sky to one celebrated by the dynastic forebear. Similarly, on Stela 46, the mention made of *Ajasaaj* is in a clause attributing him with the agency for a re-founding event in AD 595 (9.8.2.3.15), set in apposition to rituals performed by *K’ahk’ Tiliw* and his mother some 131 years later. As such we can see that the discursive rupture may also reflect changing patterns of focus and mirror the growing distance between *K’ahk’ Tiliw* and Lady Six Sky.

Denouement

Considering the retrospective nature of the textual record that has survived from the regency of Lady Six Sky and the reign of *K’ahk’ Tiliw Chan Chaahk*, we also have to be sensitive to which events are contemporary to the monuments that bear them and which are not. Plotting the events that are tied to Lady Six Sky and segregating these from the events wherein *K’ahk’ Tiliw* is specifically named as agent, and contrasting these to the latest dates of the monuments that they have commemorated conjointly, we can see that the monumental record is restricted to a relatively limited window spanning over AD 702–726, whereas the historical records stretches back to the celebrated ‘arrival’ event in AD 682 (Figure 13). This evident discrepancy clearly raises the question of why there is such a lengthy lacuna of monuments during the first two decades and also should urge us to question the veracity of



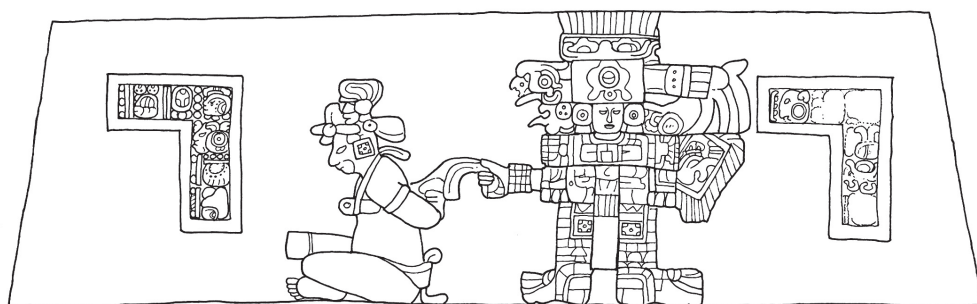
**Figure 13.** The historical episodes tied to Lady Six Sky and *K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk* as two discrete linear plots, in comparison to the monumental record below, represented by the green absolute frequency distribution curve, illustrating which parts of the historical narrative are contemporary versus those that are clearly retrospective (graph by Christophe Helmke).

the events that are said to have taken place during this period, not the least since these two decades account for at least a third of Lady Six Sky's regency and more than half of the reign of *K'ahk'Tiliw*.

It bears remembering that one of the pivotal events during this period is the defeat of Calakmul at the hands of *Jasaw Chan K'awiil I* in AD 695, an event that heaved Tikal out of the shadows of its long hiatus. The ripples of Calakmul's plummeting fall were felt among all of its allies and Naranjo appears to have been particularly affected by Tikal's newfound ascendancy, which may go a long way to explaining the difficulties faced by the Naranjo court, and Lady Six Sky, during the infancy of *K'ahk'Tiliw Chan Chaahk*. In hindsight, it may not be coincidental that Lady Six Sky is said to arrive just two months after the accession of *Jasaw Chan K'awiil I*, as though both events are somehow causally related. Furthermore, the stucco scene that adorns Str. 5D-57 in the Central Acropolis at Tikal, shows a victorious *Jasaw Chan K'awiil*, dressed as a Central Mexican warrior (Miller 1978: Fig. 4), just two weeks<sup>13</sup> after the fateful defeat of Calakmul (Martin and Grube 2000: 45), grasping a captive who is said to be *ajbahuun sihn*<sup>14</sup> *ajsa'uul* 'he of Nine extents, he of Naranjo' (Figure 14). Who this figure may

<sup>13</sup> The glyphic caption to the iconographic tableau that shows the defeated Naranjo figure is headed by a Calendar Round date, which appears to read 11 Chuwen 4 Yax, which occurred 13 days after the decisive defeat of Calakmul, and thereby is anchored to the 9.13.3.8.11 Long Count date, which would correspond to the 18<sup>th</sup> of August AD 695 (see also Martin and Grube 2000: 45).

<sup>14</sup> This segment is written 9-T501[544]-ni, wherein the intervening sign may function as a syllabogram. Marc Zender (2014b: 55-58), based on the glyphs incised on the bone rings discovered at Cahal Pech, has suggested the value so? for the sign in question, whereas the present author has worked with the value si?. Based on these

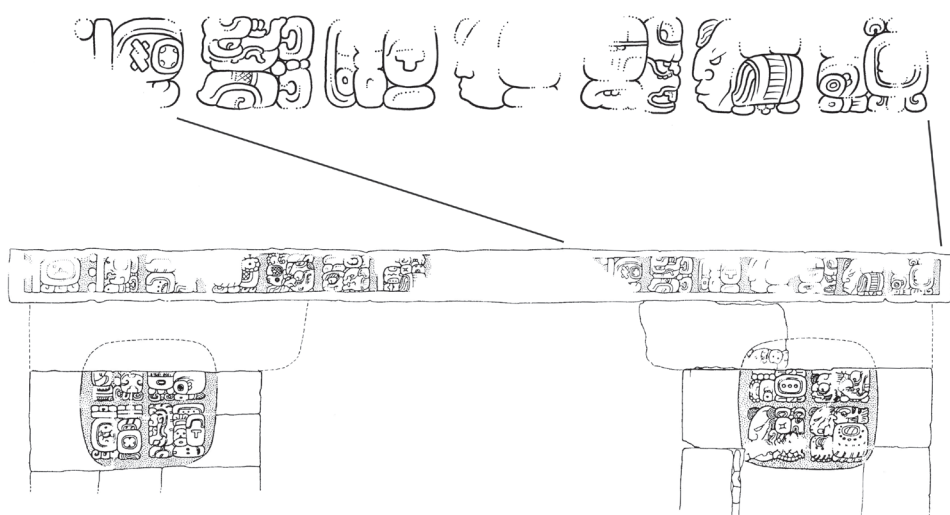


**Figure 14.** The stucco frieze adorning the eastern end of the upper zone of Str. 5D-57 of the Central Acropolis at Tikal, showing *Jasaw Chan K'awiil I* grasping a captive from Naranjo, following the decisive battle of AD 695 (after Schele and Mathews 1998: Fig. 2.29a, © Los Angeles County Museum of Art, reproduced with permission).

have been is unknown, but clearly he was of the auxiliary troops that fought on the side of Calakmul (Martin and Grube 2000: 76). It is this constellation of historical events that undoubtedly affected and brought about this very serious gap in the historical record at Naranjo, one that is difficult to overlook even though the later monuments provide the lion's share of a very vivid narrative that on the surface is quite convincing. This means that much of the historical record of the late seventh and eight centuries is not a contemporary record as such but is mostly retrospective and thereby liable to inaccuracies, omissions, emendations and the like. Clearly these muted decades were a period wherein Lady Six Sky was struggling to gain control of the court Naranjo and win the favour of its courtiers. Undoubtedly removing the opposition proved to be more tedious, demanding and time-consuming than had been anticipated. At the very least this casts doubt on the validity of *K'ahk' Tiliw* as legitimate heir to the throne and whether his accession was properly sanctioned by the local authorities both secular and sacerdotal. And this despite the now attested parentage statement on Stela 46, which makes it clear who the father of *K'ahk' Tiliw* was. Bearing a complete Naranjo Emblem Glyph implies high station but his omission from the written record, with the exception of his mention at the twelfth's hour, is not coincidental. Had the father been the rightful predecessor, or at least an important and charismatic figure, one imagines that *K'ahk' Tiliw* would have capitalised on this fact. One can thereby conjecture that the father may have been of advanced age and perhaps his absence was brought about by his physical absence in the boy's life, brought about by passing, timely or otherwise.

At the opposite end of the written record, we can see that both Lady Six Sky and *K'ahk' Tiliw* *Chan Chaahk* rapidly fall into obscurity after AD 726, with the texts of Stelae 18 and 46. In fact, Naranjo is decidedly plunged into a hiatus period wherein no monument is erected until AD 746, with the dedication of Stela 20, commemorating the accession of *K'ahk' Yipiiy Chan Chaahk* (Martin and Grube 2000: 79). One hint at the fate of Lady Six Sky though is known from her native Dos Pilas, where the text adorning the edge of a hieroglyphic bench in a residential compound in proximity to the royal palace records a series of death statements initiated by a perimortem scattering ritual (Houston and Mathews 1985: 17) (Figure 15). The penultimate clause records what may be the Calendar Round date 11 Chikchan 8 Pop or 12 Kimi 9 Pop (9.15.9.11.5/6), corresponding to the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> of February AD 741, and the passing of a woman whose names and titles bear an uncanny similarity to those of

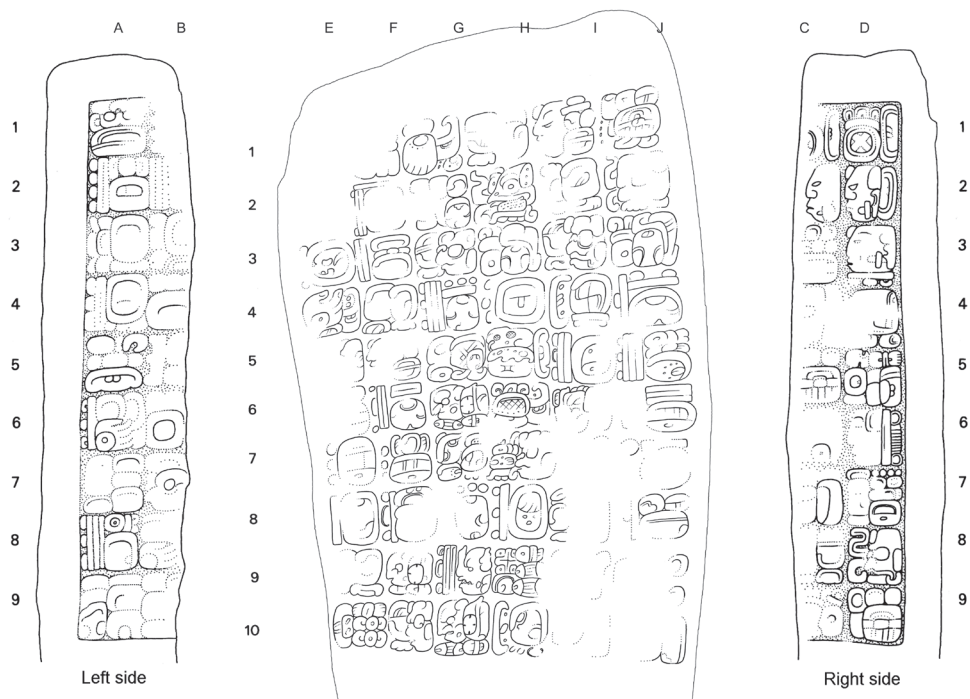
values the title can be read as *baluun soon* or *baluun sihn*. The quantified lexeme may be related to the transitive verbal root *sin* 'to extend' attested in the Madrid Codex (Boot 2009: 160), perhaps nominalized as *sihn* 'extent'. Note also *si'in* in Ch'orti' (Wisdom 1950: 632) 'extend, long, in a line or series'.



**Figure 15.** The hieroglyphic bench of Dos Pilas recording what may be the death statement of Lady Six Sky (drawing of the bench adapted after Houston 1993: Fig. 4-9; drawing of detail by Christophe Helmke).

Lady Six Sky (Vilella 1991; Houston 1993: 108). A foreign death record is not as unusual as might appear at first, not the least since the Late Classic kings kept tabs on their homologues even those of rival Dos Pilas, dutifully recording their death dates on diminutive texts incised into human bones (see Houston 1993: 99, Fig. 4-2, Moholy-Nagy 2008: Fig. 196c). The identification of Lady Six Sky in this text has been called into question in recent years (Guenter 2008), yet based on the remaining traits, the link to Dos Pilas, the contemporaneity of dates and their plausible match with human longevity, makes this a convincing case in my opinion. This pivotal date would thereby provide us with a good anchor against which to gauge the remainder of the available historical data. Much like the muted decades during the initial part of Lady Six Sky's regency, the final 15 years after the last mention to *K'ahk'Tiliw* are equally obscure. Ultimately, his rather abrupt disappearance from the written record, suggests that he may have succumbed to an untimely death, sometime in his early forties (based on the *ux winakhaab ajaw* title that his son bestows upon him posthumously on vase K7750 as well as on Stela 13).

However, in the vacuity of these latter years a glimpse of the difficult transition from one reign to another is afforded by the texts of Stelae 18 and 46. The front of Stela 18, which undoubtedly bore an image of Lady Six Sky, has completely splintered off and weathered beyond recognition. The lateral texts survive for the most part and these were inscribed in tandem with the erection of the monument on the occasion of the Period Ending of 9.14.15.0.0 (14<sup>th</sup> of Sep. AD 726), commemorating the rites conducted on this date as well as Lady Six Sky's parentage (Figure 16). What is intriguing is the text on the reverse of the monument. It is clearly incised in fine, almost calligraphic glyphs, that are aesthetically a world apart from the almost squared and impassive glyphs of the sides. On account of being incised, the rear text has suffered greatly from spalled limestone, leaving us with a text wherein nearly half is completely erased and the remainder is only moderately legible in parts. Nevertheless, despite weathering the calendrical information recorded can be reconstructed for the entirety of the text (Table 4). Keen observers have remarked that the incised text must be a secondary addition, added a later date (Martin and Grube 2000: 78; Grube and Martin 2004: 136). There is a lot of merit to this interpretation. For one the incised text provides an account stretching back to the 9.12.10.0.0



**Figure 16.** The texts of Naranjo Stela 18. Note that the lateral texts are coeval to the erection of the monument in AD 726, whereas the incised text on the back was added at a later date, during the reign of *Yax Mayuy Chan Chaahk* (drawing of reverse by Christophe Helmke; lateral texts after Graham and Von Euw 1975: 48; © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM# 2004.15.6.2.32 and 2004.15.6.2.33).

**Table 4.** The chronological overview of the text on the reverse of Stela 18

Reference	Long Count	Tzolkin	Haab	Julian Date
E1-F1	9.12.10.0.0	9 Ajaw	18 Sotz'	08 May AD 682
F2	+ <u>5.12</u>			
E3-F3	9.12.10. 5.12	4 Eb	10 Yax	28 Aug. AD 682
F6-F7	+ <u>2.3.10.12</u>			
E8-F8	9.14.13.16.4	5 K'an	7 Yax	14 Aug. AD 725
G4	+ <u>8.18</u>			
H4-G5	9.14.14.7.2	1 Ik'	0 Pop	08 Feb. AD 726
G8	+ <u>3.12</u>			
H8-G9	9.14.14.10.14	8 Hix	12 Sotz'	21 Apr. AD 726
J4	+ <u>7.6</u>			
I5-J5	9.14.15.0.0	11 Ajaw	18 Sak	14 Sep. AD 726



Period Ending of AD 682 (E1-E2), heralding the arrival of Lady Six Sky later the same year (E3-E6), then jumping 43 years forward to August AD 725, at which juncture an eroded event is named that ties *K’ahk’ Tiliw* to the name of his successor *Yax Mayuy Chan Chaahk* (E7-H3). Interestingly, these figures are here referred to as *ch’ok-taak* ‘youth-s’ and as we will see the repeated mention of this formulation indicates that these “youngsters” are the focus of the text. By recording what seems to be a ritual event wherein both participated, on a date when *K’ahk’ Tiliw* was still decidedly well and alive, serves to bolster the claims of *Yax Mayuy Chan Chaahk* to the throne and confirm that he has acquired the ritual privileges to be king in his own right (see Helmke 2010). This event is followed six months later by the celebrations of the Maya New Year (Stuart 2004) at which juncture *K’ahk’ Tiliw* is specifically credited with raising a stela on that occasion (H4-H7), and on Stela 46 this same event is said to have been witnessed by a series of foreign monarchs, including the king of Altun Ha (Martin *et al.* 2017: 672; Helmke *et al.* 2018). The same clause on Stela 46 goes on to relate a “paw-and-pillow” event, which on Stela 18 involves the aforementioned ‘youths’—an event that duplicates that which *Ajasaaj* may have undertaken in AD 564 (9.6.10.0.0) (Figure 12c).

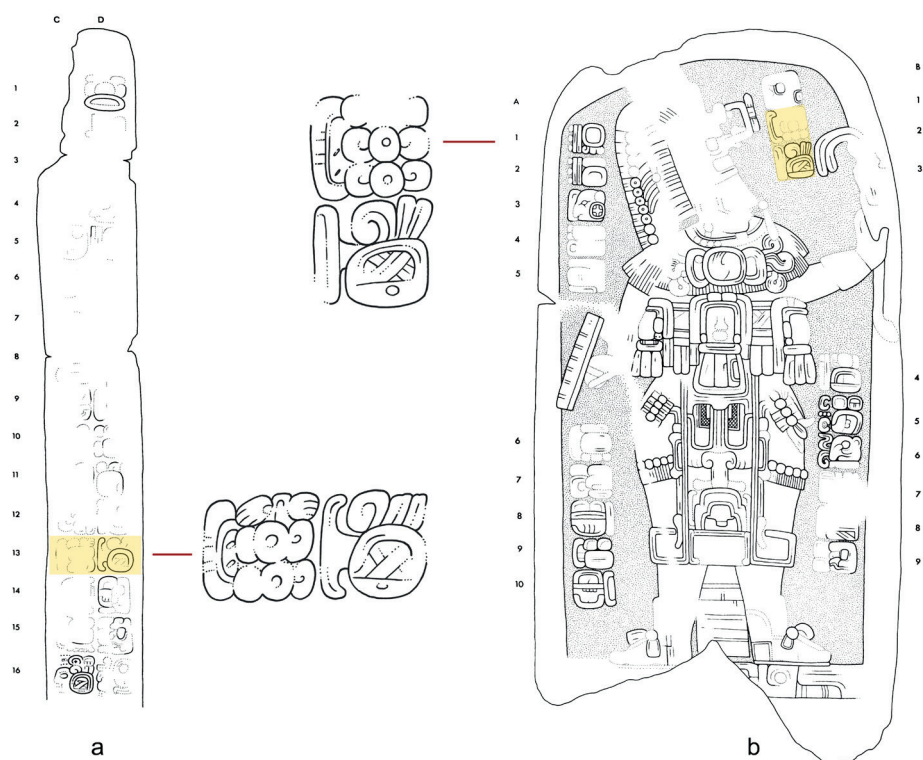
A little over two months later the narrative on Stela 18 shifts to a “star war” action (H8-H9a). In many ways this segment is one of the most interesting since the verb is immediately followed by **ti-ko-ko** (H9b), probably recording a preposition and *Komkom*—a toponym that appears multiple times in the corpus of Naranjo as a place that is the target of numerous martial actions (Houston *et al.* 1992: 507-508). The segment *ch’ok-taak* follows suit (G10). There are multiple possible interpretations, one of which is to suggest that it is the ‘youths’ of *Komkom* that were somehow defeated, but perhaps it makes more sense to see the *ch’ok-taak* segment as a rejoinder of the subjects previously mentioned, that is the young Naranjo dynasts (see Grube and Martin 2004: 137). Despite these ambiguities, this pivotal sentence is closed by another, headed by the agency expression *uchabjiy* (H10), that serves to introduce the agent of an event in a clause whose syntax locks the subject to the patient and does not otherwise allow the causative factor behind the verb to be conveyed. Although the name (I1) and title (J1) of the agent are partly eroded, sufficient details remain to identify the name of Lady Six Sky and her Emblem Glyph, which are followed by what appear to be the names and titles *K’ahk’ Tiliw* (J2-J3), preceded by a relational expression (I2), possibly *yitaaj* ‘with’ (see Stuart 1997: 5). After this tumultuous event, the narrative closes five months later with the commemoration of the 9.14.15.0.0 Period Ending of September AD 726, duplicating precisely the same date as that of the original lateral texts of the monument. Whereas the incised text plunges back into time, thereby clearly betraying its retrospective nature, the scribes have also been careful to weave the narrative with that already rendered on the monument, in order to avoid any overt anachronisms of which surely some overtones are perceptible. What is troubling about this account is that this is the text that appears to have been added rather belatedly to legitimise the claims of *Yax Mayuy* to the throne. However, whereas the thrust of the incised text is clear, as one that serves to bolster the claims of *Yax Mayuy* to the succession, it should be recalled that *Yax Mayuy* is only explicitly mentioned once in the text. In contrast, Lady Six Sky and *K’ahk’ Tiliw* appear to be mentioned three times each, and as such, this follows the pattern of predominance seen in the other monuments raised by Lady Six Sky. As such, rather than a text appended by *Yax Mayuy* in his own hand, it now seems much more likely to be an postscript added by Lady Six Sky to one of her already existing monuments, to better couch the rhetoric that justified the contrived accession of *Yax Mayuy*.

Very little of *Yax Mayuy Chan Chaahk* is known, and in fact there seem to be more references to him at Tikal than there are at Naranjo (see Martin 1996; Martin and Grube 2000: 49, 78-79; Grube and Martin 2004: 139-141). The reason for this is that *Yax Mayuy Chan Chaahk* was captured in February AD 744, during a strategic surprise raid orchestrated by the *Yik’in Chan K’awiil*, the king of Tikal (Helmke *in press*; Martin 1996; Zender 2005b). The raid was effective due to the element of surprise, being executed on New Year’s day of the Maya calendar. In addition to his defeat and



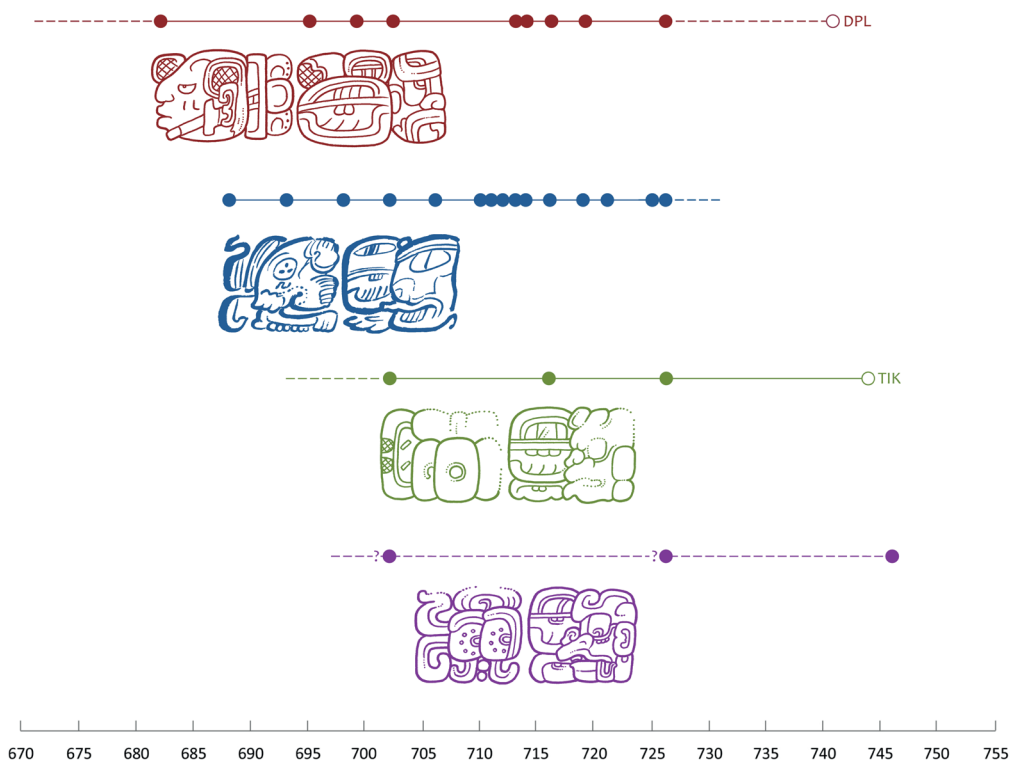
capture, his palanquin was seized and marched triumphantly through Tikal (Martin 1996: 229; Martin and Grube 2000: 49, 79). On Tikal Stela 5, *Yax Mayuy* is shown defeated, humiliated and bound at the feet of the Tikal king, *Yik'in Chan K'awiil*. It is clear that this defeat at the hands of Tikal was an irreversible setback, which only reduced the strength of the Naranjo dynasty and further complicated its economy (one surmises that Naranjo was reduced to tributary relation, paying indemnities to the victorious state), thereby deepening all the more the hiatus that Naranjo was already plunged into. However, who was *Yax Mayuy Chan Chaahk* in relation to his predecessors *K'ahk' Tiliw* and Lady Six Sky? Whereas no clear parentage statement survives that helps to resolve this question, we also know that *K'ahk' Ukalaw Chan Chaahk*, who acceded in AD 755, made it abundantly clear that he was the son of *K'ahk' Tiliw* and Lady *Unen Bahlam* of *Tubal* (Martin and Grube 2000: 80; Grube and Martin 2004: 143). Thus, the omissions of similar statements on the part of both *Yax Mayuy Chan Chaahk* and *K'ahk' Yipiit Chan Chaahk*, who acceded in AD 746, may be significant in this regard. Whereas this may seem as though much is being made from negative evidence, the fragments at hand are nonetheless very suggestive. Whereas established consensus suggests that the earliest mention to *Yax Mayuy Chan Chaahk* is found on Stela 18, and dated to c. AD 726 (Martin and Grube 2000: 78; Grube and Martin 2004: 137; Grube 2004b: 203), this assessment is erroneous. A careful examination of the extant corpus reveals that two additional mentions are made to *Yax Mayuy* on both Stelæ 1 and 28, dated respectively to AD 702 and 719 (see Martin 1996: 231). This pushes mentions to him in the local corpus by as many as 24 years. Most significantly, the earliest monument raised by either Lady Six Sky or *K'ahk' Tiliw* is Stela 1 in AD 702. As such, *Yax Mayuy* does not only seem to make a late appearance towards the end of the reign of *K'ahk' Tiliw*, making scribbled attempts to support his claims on the latest monument, as has usually been stipulated, but instead seems to have been a figure that was present early on, albeit in a more secondary role. Instead of being an ostensible offspring of *K'ahk' Tiliw* as some have suggested (Martin and Grube 2000: 78), it now seems much more probable that *Yax Mayuy* was a younger sibling of *K'ahk' Tiliw*, although whether they both shared the same parents, or just one, is unknown. The sibling hypothesis may be bolstered by the incised text of Stela 18, where both *K'ahk' Tiliw* and *Yax Mayuy* are referred to as *ch'ok-taak*, as though there were generational peers. In addition, the relationship glyph on that same stela, which ties *K'ahk' Tiliw* to *Yax Mayuy* (G2), closes with the term *-winik*, and as such may well have recorded a male sibling term (see Stuart 1997: 5). The examples found on Stelæ 1 and 28 can be read *Yax Mayuy Nah Sa'* (Figure 17), suggesting that these record pre-accession, or youth names, thereby giving these an air of authenticity, since the mention made on the back of Stela 18 records the full accession name, betraying the anachronicity of this record. If these interpretations are correct, Lady Six Sky may have preferred to pass the reins of power to a younger sibling, rather than allowing the crown to pass to the offspring of *K'ahk' Tiliw*. This could have been done to maintain her power and influence at the court as continued regent, a position she does not seem to have been keen to surrender. Considering that she may have died in AD 741, it may not be coincidental that we see mentions made to *Yax Mayuy* as king after this date, as if Tikal was testing its adversary, shortly after his accession to the throne. As such, *Yax Mayuy* may have been kept at bay for many years after the passing of *K'ahk' Tiliw*, only being able to assert himself after the passing of the maternally dominant figure of Lady Six Sky.

A close inspection of the third sentence of the rear text of Stela 18 confirms the name of *Yax Mayuy Chan Chaahk* following the verb and that of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk* at the end of clause, yet there are three intervening glyph blocks between these two figures, wherein the first two appear to spell a name and the third a relationship expression involving ... *winik*. If this is correct, then this important clause of Stela 18 records not only the names of these two individuals, but also a third. Comparing this sentence to that found on Stela 1, we can see notable similarities. On Stela 1, the names are each rendered in two glyph blocks, with *Yax Mayuy* (here with his pre-accession name) first and *K'ahk' Tiliw* last, leaving once more a third intervening name. The name recorded on Stela 1 is weathered



**Figure 17.** Two of the earliest mentions to *Yax Mayuy Chan Chaahk* at Naranjo, apparently using his pre-accession or youth name *Yax Mayuy Nah Sa'*, as seen on a) the left side of Stela 1 and b) the front of Stela 28 (glyph drawings by Christophe Helmke; stelae after Graham and Von Euw 1975: 12 and Graham 1978: 75; © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM# 2004.15.6.2.2 and 2004.15.6.3.6).

and unclear but appears to record a *chan chaahk* name, favoured by the Late Classic kings of Naranjo (Grube 2002: 344-347). The outline can be made out on Stela 18, but here the initial segment is clearer and may record **#-ba-la-ja**, thereby yielding the affective verb *bajlaj*, also seen in the name of Lady Six Sky's father (Zender 2010: 2-4). Based on the text of Stela 46 it is now clear that this same name should be read *Yax Bajlaj Chan Chaahk* (Martin *et al.* 2017: 670-671). Intriguingly, the nominal segment of *K'ahk' Yipiiy Chan Chaahk* on Stela 20, not only records his throne name (B1-B2), but is preceded by another that is only partially preserved (A5-A6). Considering the examples that we have wherein certain rulers maintain their youth name even after accession, these are typically used in initial position, with the name acquired at accession following (see Colas 2014: 28; Grube 2002: 324-325). Thus, here we may be looking at the same pattern wherein *Yax Bajlaj Chan Chaahk* is a youth name, and intriguingly the initial part of the name on Stela 20 is written **ba-la**, possibly spelling the same name that we see recorded on Stelae 18 and 46. As such, *K'ahk' Yipiiy Chan Chaahk*, may be the third individual mentioned on Stelae 1, 18 and 46. Whereas this is difficult to corroborate on the basis of present evidence, it paints an interesting picture wherein what may be three siblings took the throne, one after each other in a succession following the pattern of agnatic seniority (Figure 18),



**Figure 18.** The historical trajectories of Lady Six Sky compared against those of *K'ahk' Tiliw* and *Yax Mayuy* as well as the possible references to *K'ahk' Yipiiy Chan Chaahk*—foreign mentions are shown as hollow circles (graph by Christophe Helmke).

duplicating that seen at Palenque after the lengthy reign of *Pakal*, until finally, the offspring of one of the brothers took the throne, in this case *K'ahk' Ukalaw Chan Chaahk*, and the succession proceeded down a generation, again duplicating the case of Palenque. What is striking about this scenario is that it follows the predictive model wherein lengthy reigns tend to be followed by a rapid succession of shorter reigns, each one unstable due to the relatively advanced age of the incumbents at their accession. Assuming that Lady Six Sky wielded some sort of power from her arrival in AD 682 until her death in 741, this would make her regency one that lasted 59 years, making it one of the longest Classic Maya reigns on record, bested only by a handful of long-reigning monarchs<sup>15</sup> even though she nominally never ruled as monarch. As such we can see her fulfilling her aspirations to emulate and personify *Ajasaaj Chan K'inich*, the longest reigning monarch of the Classic period.

<sup>15</sup> These are: *Ajasaaj Chan K'inich* of Naranjo with a stunning 69 years, *K'inich Janaab Pakal* of Palenque with 68 years, *K'ahk' Uti' Juun Witz' K'awiil* of Copan with 67 years as well as “Itzamnaaj” *Bahlam* III of Yaxchilan and *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Yopaat* of Quirigua both with 61 years (see Grube 2004a; Martin and Grube 2000).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is hoped that the review presented here has stimulated our thinking on the regency of Lady Six Sky and the reign of *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk* and encouraged us to reconsider some of the basic assumptions that we have of this pivotal period in Naranjo's dynastic history. As a regency, there are several features that are inherent, including the regent's assumption of power on behalf of the child as the latter bides his time and aspires to a position of authority that he has been groomed for. As we have seen, regencies were also often characterised by conflict with neighbours, but served as solid bridges between often tenuous successions.

As a foreign female to the Naranjo court, one must assume that Lady Six Sky must have had a local male homologue, irrespective of whether he was the ruler or even a close member of the royal family. The clear parentage statement now provided on Stela 46 resolves a lot of the quandaries and queries that have plagued epigraphers for decades. Yet, despite the clarity imparted by this statement we still need to account for the relative absence of *K'ahk' Tiliw*'s father and Lady Six Sky's spouse in the written record as well as the relatively late appearance of his names and titles. One relatively prosaic explanation might be that he was of advanced age, that Lady Six Sky did not maintain a good relationship with him and that upon his death he was essentially expunged from the historical record, not the least since two decades separate her arrival from the first historical monument, and three decades separate the accession of *K'ahk' Tiliw* to the mention of the parentage. Alternatively, the father may have been captured or fallen in battle, at the hands of Tikal in AD 695, and thereby constituted a blemish on the court, after which it was deemed best to erase him from the historical narratives. Another male may well have intervened in such a scenario, thereby greatly complicating the plot, much as is in the case of the Old World regents we saw at the onset. The retrospective account of her arrival to Naranjo, as recorded on Stela 29 (and dated to AD 714) lists a number of male figures that are said to *yita-hul* or 'co-arrive' and if one were to imagine a lurid scenario, it might well be that one of these individuals had a closer relation to Lady Six Sky than the texts at first seem to imply. In any case the mere mention of these individuals indicates that they played some significant part and that the regent deemed them important enough to be commemorated on what one might call her arrival saga. Yet, on par with Old World analogues, Lady Six Sky made deliberate efforts to liken herself and her deeds to those of prestigious forebears, often times erecting monuments at precisely the same ritual sites, as if to underscore a more direct and tangible connection with the past.

The relation between *K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Chaahk* and Lady Six Sky was undoubtedly strained, not the least considering the power exerted by the regent, even after the majority of the king and throughout the remainder of his reign, and allowing for the many monuments raised by the regent in her own name, even pairing these with the king as if they were a wedded pair. This indiscretion says a lot about the role that *K'ahk' Tiliw* played in Lady Six Sky's eyes, essentially functioning as surrogate husband to a dominant mother. Whereas this may not have had much impact on the ruler in his youth, during puberty and certainly as an adult, this cannot have been an easy predicament to cope with and points to an unhealthy relationship between parent and child. That being said, however, much of the monumental record also speaks of close collaboration and of a sense of productive partnership between the regent and the king in their efforts to stabilise the influence of Naranjo and to maintain its territory, tributary relations, diplomatic alliances, and ties of vassalage.

As an instance wherein a female regent acted as *de facto* ruler, asserting authority beyond the confines of the station, the relationship between the king and the maternal figure certainly prompted much discussion then, just as it still continues to fascinate us today. The sudden disappearance of *K'ahk' Tiliw* from the written record when he was in his early forties, and the fact that Lady Six Sky failed to raise monuments to observe the Period Endings of AD 731 (9.15.0.0.0) and 741 (9.15.10.0.0), are strong indications that the ruler succumbed to a sudden and untimely death, which visibly deprived

Lady Six Sky of much of her authority. This scenario closely duplicates the early death of the *Tongzhi* Emperor, during the regency of *Cixi*, when he was just 19 years of age, presumably the product of disease coupled with psychological damages. In order to maintain her station, *Cixi* thereby introduced yet another minor to the throne, whom she could continue to manipulate. In the case of Lady Six Sky, she may have resorted to the same recourse, which may explain the presence of a youthful *Yax Mayuy*, as younger sibling to the king, in the texts raised during the reign of *K'ahk' Tiliw*. What is significant about these early mentions is that these all appear to record his youth name, a telling sign that these are contemporaneous references. Noteworthy in this regard are the mentions made to *Yax Mayuy* on Stelæ 18 and 46 by his full regnal name betraying some sort of ascendancy in the accounts. Even if this is the correct reconstruction of events we can see that *Yax Mayuy* was left in the long shadow of the regent, since he does not appear to have raised monuments locally and he only comes into sharper focus upon his capture by Tikal, a short three years after the passing of Lady Six Sky. Whether he met his death at the hands of Tikal is not known, but the event certainly had a detrimental effect on the Naranjo dynasty and the following ruler *K'ahk' Yipiiy Chan Chaahk*, may be yet another sibling of the king, as is made tacit by the texts of Stelæ 1 and 18.

As such, we may see a pattern wherein Lady Six Sky preferred to see a set of three siblings to the throne, one after the other in succession, rather than relinquishing the succession to the progeny of the ruling monarch, a pattern that in large measure can be said to follow a succession pattern of agnatic seniority seen at Palenque in the wake of *Pakal's* long reign. The lengthy and highly centralised *de facto* rule of Lady Six Sky, and the maternal dominance that she exerted, made the successors ill-equipped to rule, resulting in a succession of weak kings and ultimately Naranjo's Second Hiatus. It is only upon the passing of *K'ahk' Yipiiy Chan Chaahk* that the long-lasting legacy of Lady Six Sky was superseded, finally seeing a son of *K'ahk' Tiliw* come to throne as *K'ahk' Ukalaw Chan Chaahk*, in AD 755. This accession took place at least two difficult decades after the passing of his father and after witnessing the demise of what may have been at least two male relatives. It is this accession that finally brought to a close Naranjo's Second Hiatus, which in large measure is the corollary of Lady Six Sky's lengthy regency, since short and stunted reigns typically follow periods of stability ruled over by strong and charismatic sovereigns. Whereas these are far from the last words on this central chapter of Naranjo's history, it is hoped that this foray will stimulate additional discussion, discursive analyses and that monuments discovered in the future will help to flesh out this story, thereby corroborating or refuting some of the explanations espoused in this study.

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